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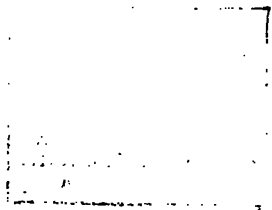
LE ROW

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



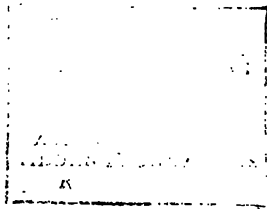
To Effie,
X mas, '08

From
Uncle Bob &
Aunt



To Effie,
X mas, '08

From
Uncle Bob &
Aunt





"Dr. Davidge," said Agnes softly He looked up with a start, then **rose,**
taking a step forward.—Page 232. *Duxberry Doings.*

DUXBERRY DOINGS

A NEW ENGLAND STORY

By CAROLINE B. LE ROW

Author of "A Fortunate Failure," etc.



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DUXBERRY DOINGS,

By CAROLINE B. LE ROW.

DUXBERRY DOINGS.

CHAPTER I.

AGNES HALIBURTON studied the effect of torchon lace on the rag carpet. The lace was very soft, white, and fine; the carpet coarse, frayed, and of the dullest grays and browns,—a perfect symbol, she thought, of the lives of the persons who daily walked over it.

It was home-made in the severest sense of the word. Aunt Melinda, of most respected memory, had, according to family tradition, cut every inch of the rags with her own hands. The work was accomplished when the exemplary lady was nearly eighty and considerably crippled by paralysis, consequently the achievement was looked upon as nothing less than miraculous—perhaps it was; and the carpet was regarded as a work of art—which it certainly was not. To Agnes it was simply hideous.

She was not of a speculative turn of mind, but as she adjusted with the point of her slipper the masses of white drapery upon the floor—the elaborate train of her wrapper—she fell into a reverie concerning Aunt Melinda whose daguerreotype, with a supernatural glitter in one eye where the sunlight struck it, looked down upon her from the opposite wall.

Evidently her meditations were of the most unsatisfactory kind, for she arose suddenly with a little sigh, and, walking to the window, looked anxiously down the long dusty road. At that moment a door behind her opened with a bang, and a head was thrust into the room.

“Miss Kenyon’ll come soon’s she can. Told me to tell you.”

The boy stood, cap in hand, on one leg, the other stretched out behind him, as if awaiting orders and eager to execute them. His attitude suggested the flying Mercury, though it was the only thing about him which could possibly suggest anybody, for in face, figure, and general expression, he was a unique specimen of humanity.

"And who are you?" Miss Haliburton inquired, smiling a little at the oddity of his appearance. "Please stand on both feet, will you, and try to look comfortable. Who are you?" she repeated, as he appeared to have forgotten the question.

"Bob."

He had a *staccato* style of speech and a remarkable contortion of the face which always accompanied his words, making both irresistibly droll.

"Yes but whose boy—where do you belong?"

"Belong here," and he elucidated his reply by a circular movement of the thumb of his left hand.

"Here in this house?"

"Yes. Yes'm."

"Do you go to Miss Kenyon's school?"

He gave his head an expressive jerk as if unwilling to commit himself to further vocal utterance.

"Do you mean that you live with Mr. Maynard, and——"

"She's a-comin'! Jest seen her dress through

them trees!" and pointing with newly acquired animation to the maples across the road, he disappeared.

He was entirely forgotten by the time Sharley Kenyon entered the parlor. Agnes Haliburton greeted her with great cordiality—evidently to Miss Kenyon's surprise as well as pleasure.

"I had no idea you would be so glad to see me, Agnes," she said.

"Then you did not know how much I liked you when we were at school together," Agnes replied. "When it was settled that I'd got to come to Duxberry, it was a comfort to me to find that you were still here."

"You might have taken that for granted," Sharley said with a laugh. "If I were alive I should certainly be living in Duxbury."

"Why, is it possible that you like it so much?" Agnes asked in astonishment. "Uncle Nathan says the place has been running down for years. It does seem to me as stupid a town as I ever saw."

"But you've not been here long, you know. How many years is it since your last visit?"

"Just five. I was twelve years old. How do you like teaching, Sharley?"

"Very much—almost as much as I expected, which is saying a great deal."

"I've just seen one of your scholars," and Agnes smiled at a sudden recollection, "the boy you sent with a message."

"Oh, yes, Bob Gridley," and Sharley smiled in her turn. "Isn't he queer?"

"He says he belongs here, though I've not seen him before."

"Your uncle has had him over a year. He is a good deal of help on the farm, but a thorn in the flesh to Miss Angeline."

"Oh, that woman! Miss Angeline! Aunt Angeline, I suppose I must call her, though she is only uncle Nathan's half sister."

"You must come and see my school before long, Agnes. You're to be here all summer, I suppose."

"Oh, mercy! I hope not!"

She laughed at the surprised expression on her companion's face.

"I'm not as fond of Duxberry as you are,"

she explained. "I should not have come at all, only father had to go abroad on business and said he should feel better about leaving me if I would stay at uncle Nathan's. He will be back in a few weeks; then I shall go to Saratoga."

Agnes Haliburton looked uneasy and discontented,—as she felt.

"If I could have gone with him I should have been perfectly happy," she went on, "but he couldn't stay this time long enough to make it worth while. I'm sure the change would have done me good. I've felt miserable for months. I'm tired out all the time." She glanced at her wrapper as she spoke. "I haven't had enough ambition to-day even to change my dress. But you won't mind it, Sharley?"

Sharley did not mind it in the least. She never did mind such things in Agnes's sense of the word. She was thinking just then what a very elegant affair the wrapper was,—she had supposed it was full dress for the afternoon. Sharley Kenyon was only half a year older than Agnes Haliburton. She admired beau-

tiful clothes as much as the wearer of them and it was not natural for her to forget that Agnes was proverbially the finest dressed girl in Creighton Academy.

"Perhaps even this change will do you good," she said, with a sympathetic expression, "and your cousin Winifred would reconcile anybody to living on a desert island, if she were there too."

Agnes still looked disturbed; then said slowly and with a little laugh,—

"But she is so different from me in every way."

"She was delighted at the idea of your coming. It has been very hard for her since her mother died, and Miss Angeline—"

"Tell me more about yourself, Sharley," Agnes interrupted at the mention of Miss Angeline's name, and apparently without the least compunction.

"A most uninteresting subject, Agnes. If variety is the spice of life, mine hasn't a bit."

"But you are looking so well, and so happy, too!"

"I am glad of that. One can keep well and decently happy even, with very little variety, you see. There's not a happier girl in Duxberry than your cousin Winnie."

Agnes shook her head dubiously.

"I can't understand it—I never shall."

"What would you do in her place?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine. It worries me even to think of it."

"You have not written to her very often?"

"No."

Agnes felt profoundly sorry that she was compelled to admit the fact, or rather that the fact existed. If she had realized just how her cousin was situated—

"I only wish I had," she said aloud to Sharley. "And I could have sent her books and papers and magazines just as well as not, if I had thought of it,—and been glad to get rid of them, too ; they accumulate so when one lives in hotels and boarding-houses."

"But the letters would have been more acceptable, Agnes. We have a Magazine Club in Duxberry. Winnie got it up."

"Winnie! I had an idea she couldn't do anything."

"A very mistaken one, as you will find. Perhaps you think she can't enjoy anything, either."

"I'm sure I couldn't if I were in her place. We will go and see her now," and Agnes led the way to her cousin's room.

Winifred Maynard lay on a lounge drawn as far as possible from the window. Her delicate face spoke as plainly of the pain which kept her captive as of the patience with which she bore it. But there was a scarlet spot on each cheek,—sure sign that she was just then suffering from one of her hard headaches.

"You must n't be discouraged about me to-day, Sharley," she said brightly, as soon as the girls entered. "I lost my head entirely yesterday, when Agnes came. I'm lucky to get it back again even in this condition."

"Oh, I'm not at all discouraged," Sharley responded. "I thought, if you were, I could cheer you up by what Dr. Davidge told me about you yesterday."

"And that was—?"

"He is surer than ever that you will be well again,—as well as you ever were,—if you are only—"

"Only patient," and Winnie concluded the sentence for her. "I'm familiar with the formula."

"You don't look as if you were ever anything else," Agnes remarked.

"You've not seen much of me yet, and you've come to make me a visit, and it's pleasant weather, and I've been sleeping better lately, and—and—" She paused in the enumeration of her blessings. The list was not a very long one at any time. "But you must wait till you talk of going away, and it rains, and I lie awake a few nights, and aunt Angeline is more nervous than usual, and the children more noisy, and then see me in one of my tantrums."

The idea of Winnie's ever being seen in a "tantrum" struck Agnes as the funniest thing possible.

"That would be worth seeing," she said with a laugh. "Mine would be chronic, if I were in your condition."

“Why, I am not so badly off as you imagine, though I’m not at my best to-day. I can go to ride with you, a little ways, sometimes, and I often walk about the room and out into the kitchen. It might be so much worse,—it has been so much worse,—you see!”

Something in the face more than in the words struck Agnes with a sudden pang. She looked away from her cousin, and picked up a book lying on a little table. But her tears blinded her. She could not see a word.

“I’m afraid Tom Lawton needs looking after again, Winnie,” Sharley said. “Will you be able to see him to-morrow?”

“I must, if that is the case,” Winnie answered quickly. “How is the baby?”

“Better, I’m glad to say. I was in there a minute this morning on my way to school. Nannie is very proud of the new apron you sent her. She keeps her hands in the pockets all the time, but she explores in vain for any more pennies. I’m going now, Winnie. You’ve talked too long already.”

She kissed her on the forehead and went with Agnes out of the room.

"Does Dr.—I've forgotten the name you mentioned—really think that Winnie will get well, or does he say so just to—to—"

"To encourage her, do you mean? No; he really thinks so, and she is a great deal better than she was three months ago. If you could have seen her when she was first hurt—"

"I'm very glad I did n't," Agnes interrupted. "Uncle Nathan wrote father about it, of course, but he did not give us all the particulars. I'd like to know just how it happened, but of course I should never ask Winnie."

"Though it would not distress her to tell you. We were riding horseback,—it was quite the fashion here once,—and there was a shower coming. We were riding quite fast, and just as we reached the barn—" she pointed down the road—"a man staggered out of the doorway and fell right under the horse's feet,—Winnie's horse. He sprang and threw her off. She was so near home she held her reins loosely, and had taken her foot out of the stirrup, so as to

jump off the next minute. She struck on her head. It was a long time before she was conscious, and days, you know, before there was any hope that she would live."

"And the man,—who was he?"

"You heard me just now speaking of Tom Lawton. That is the man."

"Didn't they do anything with him,—arrest him or something?" Agnes asked eagerly.

"What was there to do? He was the poorest and most dissipated fellow in Duxberry. He had been drinking while he was in the barn waiting for the shower to pass over. He knew what he had done. It sobered him more effectually, and kept him sober a longer time, than anything else had ever done."

"I should think it might!" Agnes exclaimed indignantly.

"Since then Winnie has taken charge, in a way, of him and his family. But I must go now," she added, rising. "There's supper to get and the children to look after, and various little diversions of that kind waiting for me at home."

“ You don’t do all that besides your teaching, Sharley ? ”

“ Yes. Why not ? Mother has not been well for a long time, and she gets very tired with our large family. After school I take her place,—as far as I can. ”

“ Doesn’t it tire you, too ? ”

“ Not at all. It quite rests me sometimes,—when I’ve been listening to the multiplication table all day, for instance. ”

With the quick motion habitual to her, she bade Agnes good-by, and walked away down the road.

“ Sharley Kenyon is just a glorious girl, as she always was, ” Agnes thought to herself as she watched her friend until she was out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

MISS ANGELINE BASCOM never knew, according to her own statement, "whether she was on foot or horseback;" and if her word concerning another matter were to be believed, no one ever lived on earth who was more reluctant to be of service to anybody.

Miss Bascom was not averse to having it known that she had retained her maiden name from deliberate choice. "I never felt any special call to take care of a great live man," she said, "or bring up a pack of noisy young ones."

The consequence of this decision was that Angeline Bascom, being more free from responsibilities than most of the women in Duxberry, was called upon oftener than any one else to share those of her neighbors.

Nominally she was housekeeper for Deacon Hotchkiss, a widower and brother-in-law, whose

farm joined that of Elnathan Maynard. A good deal of her time was spent with the family of her sister, Mrs. Ezra Barker, who found it hard work to take care of her six children. It was Angeline who, in her own phraseology, "did all the cutting and contriving to make a nightcap out of a sheet," and keep the family presentable.

The death of Mrs. Maynard was a blow to the entire town of Duxberry. She was universally known and beloved. Winifred filled her mother's place in a remarkable manner until the accident a few months later, which threatened to cripple her for life.

It was in such emergencies that Miss Bascom's talents shone resplendent. In reality there was no other woman in Duxberry who could be called upon to help the family in its great strait. Miss Bascom did not wait to be called.

Her sun-bonnet was on the nail behind the kitchen door, her sleeves rolled up, and her hands in a batch of dough, before anybody knew that she was within a mile of the Maynard farmhouse. "Though you must have some

other shoulder at the wheel straight off," she said to her brother, who was regarding her with some gratitude. "The deacon's down again with rheumatism. Ned Barker's breaking out with the measles, and I don't feel strong enough myself to lift an ox-team."

Elnathan Maynard took her at her word. A housekeeper was procured from the city, but returned to it in less than three days, dismissed by Miss Angeline as "not knowing enough to go in out of a hard shower of rain." Another one "had no more spring in her than a lumber-wagon," while a third—procured after weeks of tiresome search—used more cream in her cooking than accorded with Miss Bascom's notion of economy. If her testimony could be believed, the objectionable housekeeper "just waded in it," and her return to dry land was vehemently suggested. It really seemed from an impartial survey of the situation, as if Miss Bascom were fated to care for more than one "great live man," and to bring up more than one "pack of noisy young ones."

She was the only one who included little

Charlie and Mary Maynard under that head ; but concerning Bob Gridley, the "thorn in her flesh," as Sharley Kenyon described him, there might be an honest difference of opinion.

Bob was born nobody knew where, and first found in process of taking a surreptitious nap in a hay-mow which the selectmen of the town had seized for debt. With face, hair, and clothes bearing a strong resemblance to the property, he was considered a part of it, and when the hay was sold at auction, the hayseed, as he was facetiously termed, was planted in the poorhouse. Lean and lank as to form, watery as to eyes, freckled as to complexion, loose as to joints, Bob surely never could be loved for his looks alone. He seemed to possess some dim and humorous understanding of this fact, expressed in a good-natured grin upon a constantly wide-open mouth. The teeth thus displayed bore unmistakable resemblance to rain-discolored tombstones, loosened by frost and insecure as to position. His habit of sniffing seemed to be a spasmodic effort to prevent unbecoming laughter at himself and his surroundings. Per-

sonal observation, however, of this incessant physical contortion revealed the fact that it was a necessity forced upon him as the result of catarrh produced by a cold contracted in the haymow from a draught through the barn door.

Bob and Miss Bascom were not friends in any sense of the word. Truth forces the admission that they were deadly enemies, between whom raged an irrepressible conflict. Bob (whether by accident or design could never be learned from his imperturbable countenance) always pronounced her name "Langenine Backson." She retorted by shortening his already unpoetic cognomen to "Griddle," an insinuation as to his fondness for certain cakes baked on that particular kitchen utensil. In his undisciplined eagerness to partake of that article of food, he had been known to devour the very batter from under the nose of Miss Bascom when the big yellow bowl containing it had been left near the kitchen window.

Bob had hurried home from school eager to deliver Miss Kenyon's message. Miss Bascom

sat sewing by the kitchen window. Bob, in his usual headlong style, rushed by her, tripping over a stool, clutching in some mysterious way at her tape-measure, and thereby throwing the work-basket and all its contents upon the floor behind him. Without considering it necessary to explain, apologize, or assist in repairing the damage, he proceeded to the parlor with the message for Miss Haliburton, placidly ignoring the storm of wrath and invective raging in the rear.

But the young lady was a revelation to Bob Gridley. He had never seen any one so beautiful, he thought, certainly no one so finely dressed. She smiled, too, like an angel, though laughing at him, and he left the parlor,—jumping out of a kitchen window to avoid attracting the attention of Miss Bascom, busy among her spools on the floor,—feeling as if Duxberry would be a very different place as long as such a mortal stayed in it, “Miss Harry Burton,” as, according to his propensity for mis-calling names, he thereafter designated her.

Miss Bascom, rising to her feet again, short

of breath and red in the face, caught sight of his retreating form around the corner of the house. At that moment Mr. Maynard entered the kitchen, to her great mental relief.

"This house, big as 't is, is n't big enough for Bob Gridley and me, Nathan Maynard," she began at once.

"What's Bob done now, Angeline?" Mr. Maynard inquired, with a merry twinkle in his gray eyes. The twinkle was nothing new, however. It was characteristic of the eyes, and of the sweet, kindly nature of their owner.

"Done now!" she repeated scornfully. "He's doing all the time. His capers are like links in a chain, and for my part I wish it was round his neck!"

With this slightly vague, but very emphatic, conclusion to her sentence, Miss Bascom resumed her seat, and proceeded to rearrange the demoralized work basket.

"What did you ever take that young one for, I'd like to know?" she demanded, as if she had not asked Mr. Maynard that identical question several hundred times during her sojourn in the

house. "There's enough original sin in him to supply all Duxberry for a whole generation."

"Are those overalls of mine mended yet, Angeline?" Mr. Maynard asked good-naturedly. "Bob and I have an appointment in the barn, and I'll reason with him."

"Much good that'll do!" ejaculated Miss Bascom. "He's got to go, and that's the long and the short of it—that is, if I stay," she added. "Ezra says Ellen needs a lift with her sewing, and the baby's cutting her teeth. Besides, the deacon's down again, and he wants me, too. What are you going to do with that Haliburton girl that's just come!"

"What am I going to do with her?" Mr. Maynard repeated, watching the finishing stitches given to the overalls.

"There's no throne in this house for a Queen of Sheba and her long gowns. I don't propose to be a lady's maid at my time of life, either. I s'pose America isn't big enough for John Haliburton to do business in. If he'd put his hand in his pocket before he packed his trunk,

there's one family I know of that would n't have its nose on the grindstone all the time."

Miss Bascom cut the last thread of her work with a vigorous snap of her scissors, and gave an equally vigorous shake to the completed garment.

"Next week I'll have an interview with those gray pants, Nathan, and take a reef in the black ones. You won't want either of them right off."

Apparently she had forgotten her intention of leaving the house, and Mr. Maynard went out to the barn without hearing any further reference to the obnoxious Bob.

The Queen of Sheba, otherwise Miss Agnes Haliburton, trailed her "long gown" out into the kitchen and seated herself in Mr. Maynard's big rocking-chair by the window. She was restless and at a loss what to do with herself. Miss Bascom's society, though not specially desirable, was at any rate somewhat better than her own, and perhaps the lady would improve on acquaintance. Agnes determined to try the experiment.

"This window has a very fine view, aunt Angeline," she remarked, looking from it with apparent approbation. She hesitated over that particular form of address, but concluded that, on the whole, it would be advisable to use it. "Don't you think so?" she added.

"I never thought anything about it," Miss Bascom replied. "My views generally lie in another direction,—inside instead of out."

"And you have been here ever since Winnie was hurt, have n't you?" Agnes went on.

"Yes, but I can't stay much longer. I've got too many other families to look after. There won't be a pot or a pan in its place at the deacon's, and Ellen's children will all be walking rag-bags before long."

"But how can you leave uncle Nathan and Winnie?" Agnes asked, in surprise, never doubting that Miss Bascom intended immediate departure.

"Why, are n't you here?"

"I!"

Agnes's face did not half express the astonishment she felt, though it showed considerable.

"Can't you cook?"

"I!" Agnes repeated.

"Yes, you. You're as old as Winifred, and she's a housekeeper who'd take the gold medal anywhere."

How surprised Winifred Maynard would have been to hear such words from her aunt Angeline!

"Winnie has had a mother and a home," Agnes responded quickly. "She's had a very different sort of life from mine."

"More's the pity—for you. Mary Maynard was one of the women you read about, the only one I ever knew who was fit to train young ones anyway, so she must needs up and die and leave them. Your mother would have been just like her if she'd lived. They were as much alike as two pins on the same paper."

"Oh, aunt Angeline, and you knew my mother?"

"I could n't very well help it. We sat on the same bench when we went to the old red school-house down at the corner. We were always at the same huskings, and quiltings, and meetings,

and thought acres of each other till she was fool enough to marry your father."

"What?"

Agnes Haliburton doubted the evidence of her own ears. To her, the conclusion of the remark bore a purely personal application.

Miss Bascom looked at her keenly, pondered an instant, and appeared to change her mind about something.

"Any woman's a fool to marry any man," she said.

"Oh," and Agnes laughed slightly. "The world is pretty well filled with fools, then, aunt Angeline."

"Crowded;" and she nodded her head emphatically; "they haven't got elbow-room."

"Do you know my father, too?" Agnes inquired.

"Yes, I know him."

She did not seem disposed to continue the subject, and Agnes, from some intuition that it was not an agreeable one, forbore to question her.

"I s'pose you've been living in spots and

streaks all your days," Miss Bascom remarked after a minute's pause.

Agnes looked as if she did not comprehend her.

"I mean round in boarding-houses and what not, where folks pay big prices to be as uncomfortable as possible."

"Yes, father has always boarded ; you know he is away travelling a good deal of the time, and I've been at school so many years it never seemed worth while to keep house."

"You ought to know something by this time, even if you don't know how to cook or take care of a family. What are you going to do with yourself now you're out of school?"

Agnes looked at her curiously. Somehow the plainest facts and most simple questions had an annoying and perplexing quality when Miss Bascom stated them.

"I haven't thought very much about it," she answered reluctantly, conscious that the acknowledgment would in itself be considered a sort of disgrace.

"I should think it was high time you did, then.

What *do* you think about, I wonder. Do you make your own clothes ? ”

“ No, I never have.”

“ I s’pose you think a good deal about how you’ll have ’em trimmed, don’t you ? ”

“ Why, I have to do that. The dressmaker never wants to decide for me. Sometimes she does, though, when I have a party dress made.”

“ You go to parties, then ? ”

“ Of course I do. Everybody does in the city.”

“ And you seem to think you’ll have nothing to do but keep on going to parties all your life.”

Agnes rose quietly, deciding to return to the parlor. She was not enjoying the conversation, and its quality did not seem to improve in proportion to its length. Miss Bascom did not notice the movement or, at any rate, did not appear to.

“ I s’pose you can do plain sewing on a pinch ; hem a crash towel, for instance. I’ve got to make biscuits for tea, and I’ll hand this one over for you to finish. I hate to leave a needle sticking into anything.”

But she had left a metaphorical needle sticking into Agnes's consciousness, whether she knew it or not. The young girl did her best with the crash towel—in reality putting in much finer stitches and twice as many of them as there was occasion for—while she thought over a few of Miss Bascom's questions. Something was all wrong, she felt sure ; yet certainly the questions were sensible, practical, straightforward. She felt ignorant, useless and helpless,—a very new and exceedingly disagreeable sensation,—and she was not disposed to cherish any friendly feeling towards the woman who had brought about so undesirable a result.

CHAPTER III.

WINIFRED MAYNARD'S power lay chiefly in some mysterious, magnetic element which she possessed in no small degree. Physical science has accomplished wonders in its demonstration of the unseen yet mighty impulses of the physical universe, and it is reasonable to hope that as "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns," social science may do as much for the social world.

At present we simply feel these subtle differences in people, without being able to define or analyze them. One person repels us, though in outward appearance he may be everything that is desirable, and give no intimation of the inner man by word or look. Another attracts us powerfully, and with as little reason. It cannot be the result of prejudice, for often there is no possibility of prejudice existing. We are forced to accept the fact, and relinquish the

attempt to understand it—at least until such time as a wiser philosopher than any we have yet known shall make the matter clear to us.

But as this personal power of attraction and repulsion corresponds perfectly to the magnetic conditions of the material world, we find it convenient to employ the same term and call it personal magnetism. It was this power which was always felt in Winifred Maynard's presence.

Agnes Haliburton, entering her cousin's room quite suddenly the next day, stopped surprised at the appearance of a stranger sitting by a little table. There was coffee upon it, and a silver cake-basket, plentifully filled. The man—he could hardly be called a gentleman—was eating and drinking with great avidity. He looked up with some embarrassment as Agnes entered.

"Agnes," Winnie said instantly, "let me make you acquainted with my friend, Mr Lawton. My cousin, Miss Haliburton, from New York."

Agnes bowed, a little stiffly—perhaps,—but as the man rose and extended his hand she felt compelled to take it. It was a hard, rough one,

and she surreptitiously wiped her own on her handkerchief at the first convenient opportunity.

"So little Tom is delighted with Man Friday, is he?" Winnie asked her guest, evidently resuming the conversation at the point where it had been interrupted, that he might feel at his ease again.

"He's sorry we're so near the end of the book," the man replied. "Last night he didn't want me to read any, so it would last the longer."

"Oh, you tell him there are plenty more books for him as long as he's such a good boy at school. Miss Kenyon says he's doing wonders with his arithmetic. She takes great pride in him."

"He's a smart little chap for figures, Miss Winnie. And the baby's growing finely. I must bring him in some day again, and give you a look at him."

"I wish you would, Tom, and let him stay longer than he did before. I'm a good deal stronger now than I was a month ago."

Tom Lawton took his departure a few minutes later, Agnes watching him closely as he

left the room, and looking curiously, almost indignantly, at her cousin as the door closed behind him.

“And that’s the man,” she exclaimed, with sudden fierceness, “who is wholly to blame for your condition—who might have been the cause of your losing your life?”

“Yes.”

Winnie smiled as she answered. She understood perfectly the direction of Agnes’ thoughts.

“I shouldn’t suppose you would consider such a man as that fit to speak to, any way,” she went on; “and after all that’s happened”—

She stopped abruptly, as if it were impossible to express herself with adequate emphasis.

“It is because of all that’s happened, Agnes, that I am anxious to speak to him. If it never had happened, I should never have known how much he needed it.”

“Then it is certainly a great pity, Winifred Maynard, that you did not forever remain in ignorance. He’s a coarse, low fellow; a drunkard, too, isn’t he?”

“He was.”

“ Perhaps you think you’ve reformed him. I must say I have n’t much faith in that sort of work.”

“ Have you ever tried it, Agnes?” Winnie asked, with the same twinkle in her eye that there was often in her father’s. “ One should judge that sort of work experimentally.”

“ Now you’re laughing at me ! No, of course I have n’t, and I should never have the least desire to. Do you enjoy his society, Winnie, as much as you appear to ?”

“ Why, I’m glad if I appear to,” Winnie replied with animation. “ I must say that if I could have had my ‘drathers,’ as Aunt Angeline says, I should have preferred a nap this afternoon to entertaining Tom Lawton ; but of course I would n’t have him suspect such a thing.”

“ Oh, of course not,” Agnes remarked dryly.

“ And he did n’t want to come either ; you may be sure of that,” Winnie continued. “ But I sent him word yesterday that I must see him to-day. He has never failed me yet.”

“ And to entertain him in this way, too !” and Agnes pointed to the little table.

"A very innocent ruse of mine," and Winnie laughed again. "You heard what he said about his children?"

"Yes."

"His wife is a lovely woman—all broken-down and old before her time with hard work, and—I'm afraid—more abuse from Tom than any one will ever know about. It would be a favor to me if you would go and call upon her some day."

"If I would go there—to call on that Tom Lawton's wife!" Agnes repeated. If her cousin had proposed a trip to Madagascar she could not have seemed more surprised.

Winifred simply smiled,—the twinkle in her eye again.

"When will Uncle John get back from Europe?" she asked, apparently quite willing to change the subject.

"He can't come in less than three weeks. Probably it will be four," Agnes answered. There was some dejection in her tone.

"And then?"—

"Then I am to go with him to Saratoga,"

she said, with a little more animation. "You know I've been there two summers. It's just perfectly delightful."

"You couldn't be happy, then, to spend the whole summer with us in Duxberry?" her cousin inquired. She did not wait for an answer. In reality none was needed. "But we should be so glad to have you if you could be contented."

"I would be glad enough to stay with you," Agnes said heartily, "and Sharley Kenyon is splendid. But Aunt Angeline and—and—if I could have you and Sharley with me at Saratoga I should n't have anything left to ask for."

"Aunt Angeline is n't half so disagreeable as she tries to make you think," Winnie said eagerly. "You'll get used to her in a little while. Even Charlie and Mary understand her."

"But they are such good little things!"

"Yet they are very human children after all," Winnie said, with a shake of her head. "To think of all I want to do for them, and of how little use I can be!"

"Do you ever try any experiments with that

astonishing Bob?" Agnes asked with a laugh. "I should think he was a field for innumerable missionaries."

"I always include him with the children," Winnie answered. "I think, Agnes," she continued, as if struck with a sudden and valuable idea, "that you'd better see what you can accomplish with Bob. Father thinks there's great good in him, so there must be."

"Excuse *me*!"

Agnes made a comical grimace.

"It would be entertaining, Agnes, I'm sure of it. "And really I'm puzzled to know what Duxberry can afford you in the way of entertainment even for the short time you stay."

"If it comes to cultivating that Bob Gridley," Agnes said quickly, "I shall be reduced to a pitiful plight. I haven't the least taste for missionary work of any kind," she went on more slowly and with greater earnestness in her tone. "I don't like disagreeable persons or places. Some one must be mixed up with them, I suppose, but it ought to be some one who has

talent for that special line. I know I should never like it in the world."

"Never like it," Winnie repeated in a low tone. "It never seemed to me to be a question of liking. I always imagined it was something very different."

"What, then?"

"A question of duty," Winnie said gravely. There was a little pause between them, broken by Agnes. "I certainly thought you liked it," she said.

Winnie shook her head. "Liked disagreeable persons and places," she quoted. "Why should I?"

"Oh, not that. You know what I mean, the satisfaction of doing good,—and—and"—

"Yes, of course, there's satisfaction in that, when it's done—but the doing itself is not always pleasant work. It's a good thing to be able to cure disease, but disease itself is disagreeable. And the doctors must be terribly discouraged and out of patience sometimes. There's one now—Dr. Davidge—my doctor, you know, Agnes. You must stay and see him."

But Agnes rose hastily, ready to leave the room.

"Not this time, Winnie. I'd rather meet him when I feel more amiable. I retire to muse upon Tom Lawton, Bob Gridley, missionary work in general, yours in particular, and"—

She stopped abruptly, darting through the door. The Doctor had fastened his horse and entered the house with more alacrity than she had calculated upon.

But Agnes gave very little thought, after all, to the topics she had enumerated. Instead, she wrote a long letter which occupied her till supper time, the last sentence of which was: "Though the country here is very pretty and my cousin is as lovely as she can possibly be, I've already begun to check off the days on the little calendar you gave me. Once I should have shrunk from defacing it with a pencil mark, but present circumstances would justify any amount of that kind of desecration. A year ago to-day we were in Ballston, at the Van Wyck's lawn party. Do you remember it, and the moonlight croquet?"

The letter was addressed to Mr. Arthur A. Cosgrove, Windsor Hotel, New York.

CHAPTER IV.

“DOINGS” was the generic name given to every event which took place in the old town of Duxberry. Originally the word was limited in its application to the various kinds of merry-making which found favor with the inhabitants, but Duxberry had fallen upon evil—or, at least, monotonous—days, and for a long time there had been very little going on in the way of amusements. Still, from habit perhaps, and from the fact that there was always something transpiring in town, the word was retained and made expressive of every social event, whether merry, mysterious, or melancholy.

Duxberry had once boasted a pill-box factory, a broom factory, and a cheese factory. But owing, probably, to the efficacy of the pills enclosed in the boxes, the demand for them gradually decreased until their manufacture was given up. The new brooms swept so clean

that fewer of them were needed, and the cheese factory came to grief through a quarrel among its numerous owners. The change which gradually crept over the business condition of the village seriously affected its social interests.

The young people were, of course, the greatest sufferers, as they were the ones most addicted to the dissipations possible to the community. These were of the mildest description. Singing-clubs had flourished every winter "within the memory of the oldest inhabitant," and the vocal labor performed in them was done with spirit, if not always with understanding. Spelling matches had risen to a height of popularity which for a time produced orthographical mania in the minds of half the youth in town. There had even been a Shakespeare Society, and it was the intention of the members to make close acquaintance with Hamlet and Othello, Ophelia and Desdemona. Considerable progress was made in that direction, but a portion of each evening was by tacit consent, devoted to the delights of corn-popping and candy-pulling, the Irish Washerwoman and Virginia Reel. If

Hamlet and Ophelia were occasionally neglected and even forgotten, the young people at least became better acquainted with each other, and on a broad intellectual basis.

Sharley Kenyon had by no means forgotten those days. She had even left them reluctantly to attend Creighton Academy. Mr. Kenyon had an exalted idea of education. Mrs. Kenyon had as much strength of mind as her husband, but very little physical endurance. Sharley had for a long time borne that portion of the domestic burden which falls so naturally, though often heavily, upon the shoulders of the oldest daughter in a large and struggling family, and was greatly missed from home. Her return became, after awhile, a matter of necessity, and for the present she was obliged to give up the principal object of her own and her parents' ambition—a higher position as teacher than she could find in her native town.

But she very thankfully accepted the first one which offered, taking charge of the district school only half a mile from home, and trying to content herself with the consciousness that she was

doing her duty at least, however much it might conflict with her inclination.

No one better understood how great this conflict was than Lon Morse, the "hired man" on Mr. Kenyon's farm, and one of Sharley's particular friends. They had been companions from childhood, though Lon was Sharley's senior by four years. She had three small brothers, but she always counted Lon as her oldest and "big" one. He had been in Mr. Kenyon's employment ever since leaving school, and was an enthusiast on the subject of scientific farming.

"If I could have even one year in an agricultural college, Sharley, I'd show you what I could do," he was saying to her one afternoon, as, in his shirt-sleeves and with a hoe over his shoulder, he overtook her on her way to Mr. Maynard's house. He had been explaining to her some theory he had elaborated that day in the potato field.

"A year is a very short time, Lon," Sharley replied thoughtfully.

"I'd get at least twenty-four months out of it," Lon said with determination. "I'm trying that

new fertilizer I told you about last week. I have great faith in it if I could only get a little lift on my chemistry, Sharley—get some one to explain a couple of things that I can't see through, and—"

"Why, Agnes Haliburton, Winnie Maynard's cousin, you know,—she might help you out, Lon. Chemistry was one of the Creighton hobbies, but I left the Academy before I'd finished even the preface of mine," and she laughed somewhat dismally. "Agnes graduated there. She must know about it. I'll ask her."

"The explanation is simple enough, I'm sure," Lon remarked, "only I can't get the clew to it, somehow. The technical terms bother me, and to be so—but there! I resolved long ago that I'd take what I could get and be thankful. There's no use in grumbling."

"That's a discouraging fact," Sharley assented. "It's so easy to grumble, that if one could only make it profitable, it would be—there's Agnes, now, coming to meet me. I'm glad you can see her."

Agnes Haliburton walked more slowly as she

saw the two advancing, regarding them with disapproving eyes. They, on the contrary, were looking at her with great admiration. She was stylishly dressed in some delicate material, trimmed with an abundance of lace and ribbon. Her immense hat with drooping feathers, her lace parasol and long-wristed kid gloves, were very striking in appearance, and very novel also for Duxberry. Sharley liked the gloves as soon as she saw them. She was not quite ready to commit herself on the subject of the hat, but at any rate it was exceedingly becoming to Agnes.

Lon Morse acknowledged his introduction to her in a slightly embarrassed manner, somewhat overwhelmed, apparently, by the elegance of her dress, and repulsed a little by an indefinite but quite perceptible coolness in her manner. It was plain that Miss Agnes Haliburton did not regard as her social equal this young man who stood before her in his shirt-sleeves, with soiled hands and a hoe over his shoulder. He walked on more rapidly, leaving the young girls together, and, leaping over a fence by the road-side, took

his way across a wide stretch of field. Agnes watched him with slight interest. He certainly had a magnificent figure, she admitted.

"Who is he?" she asked, as soon as he was beyond hearing.

"One of the finest fellows in Duxberry," Sharley answered, and with so much warmth in her tone that Agnes in surprise turned to look at her.

"Why, anybody would imagine you were fond of him!" she exclaimed.

"So I am. Why not? He's been one of my best friends—just like an own brother—ever since I can remember."

"He works on a farm?" Agnes asserted, though interrogatively.

"Yes, on ours. He lost his father and mother when he was a little fellow. I believe Lon would rather be a fine farmer than—than president of a railroad corporation," she concluded.

"A high ambition," Agnes commented, with just the suspicion of a sneer.

"You would think so, Agnes, if you understood it as Lon does," Sharley said quickly.

"He's got some ideas of his own that the world will be better and richer for one of these days, or I'm very much mistaken. He studies all the time he can get from his work, though sometimes through planting and harvesting; he's too tired to open a book for days at a time. I always consider that just so much wasted time."

"What does he study?" Agnes asked, indifferently.

"A little of everything. He's interested especially in mechanics as applied to all labor-saving devices in farm-work, and chemistry. Oh, by the way, Agnes, he's got to a puzzling place in his chemistry, and I thought that perhaps you could help him. You studied it a good while, and—"

"But I never took the least interest in it," Agnes asserted.

"This is some simple point. He says he's sure it's simple, only—"

"Even the simplest ones would be too complicated for me, Sharley. I'm sure I cannot help him."

"Then I'm profoundly disappointed and sorry," Sharley replied, as if she meant it.

"And made a profound mistake if you took me for a chemist," Agnes laughed, with some uneasiness.

"How is Winnie to-day?" Sharley asked, evidently deeming it expedient to change the scientific subject for a social one.

"Brighter than I've seen her yet. Her case does n't really seem so hopeless as it did a few days ago, when I first saw her. I've met Dr. Davidge, too. What a morose, disagreeable man he is! Yet Winnie seems to like him."

"Did you find him disagreeable?" Sharley asked.

"Why, certainly. Don't you think so?"

"No, I don't think so. But a stranger might very naturally get that impression of him. He is very reserved, and a little brusque in manner."

"A little! Very much so, I should say."

"You will find that he improves on acquaintance, Agnes."

"Oh, I'm not particular about any further acquaintance with him," Agnes replied, in an

off-hand manner. "If Winnie likes him, that's enough; and if he can cure her, we shall all be eternally grateful to him."

"He's had a very unhappy life," Sharley volunteered, almost in a tone of apology. "Nobody knows just what he has been through; he's not the kind of man, as you see, to say much about himself, but he's had great trouble."

"Well, I'm afraid that would not make him any more interesting to me. It might to some people."

"When are you coming to see my school, Agnes? Bob Gridley has asked me that question at least a dozen times."

"Bob Gridley!" Agnes repeated, in surprise.

"Why, have n't you cultivated Bob's acquaintance either, Agnes?"

"The idea! That young one!"

"Don't you see anything of the children, Charlie and Mary? Mary is a very lovely little girl."

"Not a great deal. Aunt Angeline generally gives them their meals by themselves—with Bob at the head of the table, for all I know. I have

mine with uncle Nathan, and sometimes with Winnie, when she feels well enough."

As the girls entered the Maynard farmhouse, Sharley bowed to two women who were driving by in a dusty and most antiquated buggy.

"What sorter dewin's is goin' on to Elnathan Maynard's, I'd like to know?" and the elder of the two thrust her head from the vehicle for another look at the surprisingly elegant figure which had just passed them.

"Why, that's Elnathan's niece, John Haliburton's daughter, from New York. She's come to Duxberry visitin'."

"Fur the land's sakes! Well, fine feathers make fine birds, I've heerd. D'ye s'pose they're paid for?"

"Paid for? What?" her companion repeated, as if thinking of something else.

"Why, them gloves, and all them flounces an' furbelows. Mebbe she would n't toss her head up quite so high if she knew all that—"

"Taint't all likely she does, an' she walks 's if Duxberry sile was n't half good 'nuff fur her to set her foot on to."

"There's precious little mother 'bout her, I reckon. It's easy to see that. I hain't called on Winnie lately. Guess I'll take my knittin' an run over there to-morrer. You better go too, 'Mandy. I'd like to hear what Angeline 'll have to offer 'bout John Haliburton's darter, her new city boarder!"

"That's Mrs. Slocum and her sister-in-law, Agnes," Sharley was explaining to her companion, as the ancient buggy rattled down the road.

"I didn't notice them," Agnes replied in her most negative tone, blowing off a little dust from the lace parasol as she closed it; and whatever further communication Sharley had intended to make was effectually checked by Agnes's words and manner.

CHAPTER V.

BOB GRIDLEY owned a calf, given him by Mr. Maynard as a reward for certain excellences of conduct in the past, and an inducement for future good behavior. This calf was in Bob's eyes the most desirable creature in Duxberry. He was certainly as unique in appearance and temperament as Bob was himself, though, to Mr. Maynard's credit, it should be added that in infancy,—at the time the gift was made,—he promised to be as good-looking and as well-behaved as any calf in town.

Bob had various pet names for his four-footed companion, though he generally addressed him as "Kump," supposed to be short for "Company," and expressive of the fact that his was the principal society cultivated by Bob.

To say that Miss Bascom hated Kump was to state a very strong fact in a very weak way. At least a thousand times she had forbidden Bob to bring him into the kitchen.

"But you see, Miss Backsom, he jest comes along, Kump does," was Bob's invariable reply, as, on occasions when this order was disregarded, happened sometimes many times a day. Little Charlie Maynard, enjoying to the fullest extent the skirmish which generally followed, always took refuge behind some chair, where he threatened to burst with the laughter he did not dare to let his aunt Angeline see or hear.

Bob had conceived a great admiration for Miss Haliburton, and was determined to do something for her entertainment. He had noticed, with more penetration than one would have given him credit for, the uneasiness and general discontent of that young lady. Why she never cared to go out to the barn, to climb over the haymows, or look for hens' eggs; why she never stroked the horses, or watched the cows, or fed the little chickens,—all these points were matters of mystery to Bob. "Though I guess, Kump, it's the long gown and the big hat that would kinder git in the way," he confided to his boon companion.

But that Agnes would be pleased with Kump,

if only she had an opportunity to make his acquaintance, Bob never for a moment doubted. A chance for the experiment came very soon after he had decided to try it.

Agnes was sitting in a swing under the apple-trees which shaded the left side of the house. She had been reading, but the book had fallen on the ground beside her hat, and she seemed lost in a pleasant reverie. She held an open letter in her hand, though her eyes were fixed on some distant object.

"Now you jest come along, Kump, an' see Miss Harry Burton. She's jest egelant, an' she'll demire you, an' then we'll be"—

Poor Bob's confidences, as well as his good intentions, came to a sudden end. Miss Bascom, at the rear of the house, was taking up some clothes which had been bleaching on the grass. Inwardly congratulating herself that the articles bore no traces of Kump's marauding footsteps, she looked up to see Bob and the animal in question in confidential and mysterious intercourse. Another glance showed her Agnes in the swing. Never doubting that



Agnes was sitting in a swing under the apple-trees, which shaded the left side of the house.—Page 56.

Duxberry Doings.



Bob's intentions towards Miss Haliburton were as mischievous as those he frequently entertained towards herself, she made a sudden rush in that direction. Bob took to his heels. Agnes sprang up in alarm, not comprehending the commotion, while Kump faced his enemy and plunged bravely into the conflict. With his feet somewhat entangled in Agnes's hat, he yet managed to caper around Miss Bascom,—making spasmodic rushes at her,—in a way which effectually demoralized her. She had been thrown off her feet by the first attack, and after two or three revolutions, found herself close against the trunk of a tree, minus one shoe, her apron, and spectacles, Kump pulling persistently at her back hair. Agnes stood a distressed and helpless spectator.

A young man leaped suddenly over the rail fence which separated the orchard from the road, routed the enemy, and assisted the infuriated Miss Bascom to regain her physical equilibrium. It was plain that the restoration of her mental composure would be a matter of time. Bob approached her cautiously, shoe in hand, as

if tendering a peace-offering, stepping on the spectacles as he did so, while Agnes, with the torn apron in one hand and her dilapidated hat in the other, seemed to consider herself the greater sufferer of the two.

The antiquated buggy which the afternoon before had driven past the house, approached it again at that moment, Mrs. Slocum and her sister Amanda gazing with keen and appreciative eyes at the dramatic situation under the apple-trees.

Them 's great dewin's, 'Mandy," Mrs. Slocum remarked sententiously. "Had a fight, d'ye s'pose? Looks like it. What on airth's Jack Godfrey into, I'd like to know."

Just then Miss Bascom caught sight of her visitors.

"How d'ye do?" she called out breathlessly. "Just go right in. Jack'll see to the horse," and she made her way with all possible speed to the rear door of the house.

"You reprobate," the young man exclaimed, seizing Bob Gridley by the ear and holding him for an instant, in spite of his desperate wrig-

glings, "you just step around and take that horse down to the barn before I thrash you for frightening this young lady to death," and Bob, successful at last in his efforts to escape, rushed off, followed by Kump,—but not to do as Jack Godfrey had bidden him.

"You dew look, Angeline, 's if you 'd found something or other that was a leetle too much for ye," was Mrs. Slocum's first remark, as Miss Bascom, arranging her hair with one hand, placed seats for her guests with the other.

"Sister said mebbe you 'd had a fight," Amanda Slocum added, with her customary simper. "It did look like it when we fust seen ye, under them trees."

"It's only some of Bob's doings, you might know," Miss Bascom explained, devoting both hands at that moment to the adjustment of her hair. "It's lucky for him that I'm going away to-morrow, or he'd sup sorrow with a hot spoon."

"Goin' away!" the two ladies exclaimed in concert.

"Yes. The deacon's got a sore throat, and Ellen's baby's cutting its teeth, and"—

"I did n't know but you'd found the young lady from the city too much trouble," Mrs. Slocum interrupted. "I was tellin' 'Mandy as we was comin' along that I guessed you had your hands full now, ef you never had before. She don't help you none with the work, I s'pose?"

"She! Did you ever see a butterfly wash dishes?" was Miss Bascom's somewhat surprising response.

"How long's she goin' to stay?" one of the ladies inquired.

"Till her father comes to take her where she'll be happier than she is in Duxberry. The clocks in this town don't go half fast enough to suit her. I feel sorry for her myself."

"Where's her father now?"

"Trying to turn a coal-hod into a chariot, as usual. He's gone to Europe to hunt up the trees that money grows on. I hope he'll find them, and that the crops are good this year. There's need enough."

"That gal don't look 's if she could do the fust livin' thing," Mrs. Slocum observed during a

little pause in the conversation. "An' Winifred Maynard's own cousin, too ! Jest think of it !"

"You can't expect a bird of paradise to go into the water with the ducks, even if it's been hatched by a duck on a duck's nest,—which Agnes Haliburton was n't," she concluded with a literal ending to her metaphor.

Sharley Kenyon on her way home from school,—a little late that afternoon,—was smiling as she entered Winnie's room.

"Agnes is in the swing under the apple-trees," she said, "and Jack is talking to her at a great rate. They did n't see me, and I thought I would n't interrupt them. Jack thinks Agnes is the handsomest girl he ever saw in his life."

"And he tells you that, Sharley !"

"Why not ? No one ever accused me of being handsome. I knew Agnes would like Jack, he's so different, you know, from most of the Duxberry boys."

"I've no doubt he's more like the young men she has associated with," Winnie replied. "He's quite fine for Duxberry. She told me the day

she was introduced to him that he did n't look a bit 'countrified.' ”

Both of the girls laughed.

“She does n't like Lon,” Sharley said. “He was with me yesterday when she met me down the road. They did look funny as they stood there facing each other. It was patrician and plebeian, for Lon had been hoeing, and you can imagine how he looked. He is working harder than ever, Winnie, on something for the fair. It's a great secret. He won't even give me the slightest clew to it.”

“Lon has found time to do a great deal for Mrs. Lawton, Sharley, if he is working hard. You 've no idea how grateful she is.”

“Why, what has he done?”

“Don't you know?”

“I did n't know that he 'd done anything. He has n't mentioned it.”

“I believe he's mended every piece of furniture in the house,—for I guess every piece needed it,—and you know Tom has n't the least knack about things of that kind. He's put up a lot of shelves for her, fixed the cistern-cover

she was always afraid the children would tumble through, and the roof of the wood-shed. Tom will cut and split wood enough to fill it, I've no doubt, but he never could have mended the roof, you know, if it had rained in enough to float off every stick!"

"Lon's left hand will never know what his right one is doing, if it depends on him for the information. I never knew such a fellow for doing 'good by stealth,' and—what's the rest of that quotation, Winnie?"

"'Do good by stealth and blush to find it fame,'" Winnie repeated.

"That's it, only there never can be very much fame for him in this little town. He doesn't think himself there's much chance for him, either, though, of course, he must stay here for the present."

"The Bond girls came to-day to call on Agnes."

"Yes," Sharley replied, "I met them, and they told me they had been here."

"Did they tell you how they liked her?" Winnie inquired with interest.

"They were enthusiastic about her appearance, but were sure she was very proud."

"I was afraid they might get that impression."

"She certainly has a wonderful figure, and her complexion is dazzling. She's made a great sensation in the village, Winnie."

"I should n't be surprised. Her style is very unlike that of most of the Duxberry girls."

"Some of them profess to be quite afraid of her, but I don't wonder that she holds herself a little aloof from Duxberry folks and does n't take readily to Duxberry ways. I find myself forgetting sometimes how differently she has lived all her life."

"And a better-hearted girl I never saw," Winnie exclaimed warmly. "I feel sorry for her,—there is so little here to interest her. She does n't care particularly for the country, anyway. She would n't enjoy the long tramps you and I used to take, Sharley, even if I were able to go with her."

"Do you know, Winnie," Sharley said impulsively, "I'm a little curious to know something of Agnes's ideas of life. She evidently

has them, and very decided ones, too. Her circumstances have been so different from yours and mine,—in fact, from those of any girl we know,—that I wonder how we seem to her.”

“I mean to ask her some time,” Winnie said as impulsively. “What’s that?”

They both listened for an instant.

“Bob’s in disgrace again, I’m afraid,” Winnie said the next moment.

“If Miss Angeline would only appeal to his heart as often as she does to his head!” was Sharley’s comment. “I’ll go and see what the matter is.”

She crossed the hall, passed through the parlor and out into the kitchen, where—in Duxberry fashion—Miss Bascom was entertaining her guests. Bob’s lank figure was slouching out of the doorway, followed by an energetic remark.

“And if you don’t find that horse and buggy you’ll find something else that you can’t manage half so easy.”

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Slocum—Amanda,” and Miss Kenyon shook hands with the two ladies. “You don’t mean, Miss Angeline,” she

added, turning towards her as she spoke, "that Bob has lost a horse and buggy anywhere?"

"That's just what I do mean—exactly!" was Miss Bascom's reply. "That boy would put a house and lot where you'd never find them if he took a notion."

"But you told Jack Godfrey to put the horse up—I heerd ye," remarked Miss Amanda Slocum, with a look at Miss Kenyon. "Mebbe he did n't though; he was too much occurpied listenin' to some one else."

She drew a handkerchief from the reticule which was never in her waking moments—nor, presumably, in her sleeping ones—beyond her reach, and made several little dabs with it at the corners of her mouth. It was a characteristic motion with her, generally preceding, or following some offensive remark.

"Jack Godfrey's head 'll allus save his heels," she pursued, as she thrust the handkerchief into the depths of the reticule and shut it with a snap. "He ain't never goin' to take no trouble that he can shirk."

Miss Kenyon might have heard the whole of

the remark, but she was out of doors before it was finished.

Jack Godfrey and Agnes Haliburton were still beneath the apple-trees. Agnes had resumed her seat in the swing and Jack was half reclining on the grass at her feet.

"Oh, Sharley!" Agnes called out eagerly, as she caught sight of her, and making room for her in the swing, she wound her arm about her friend's waist and proceeded to give her full particulars of the events of the day, concluding with a graphic account of Miss Bascom's encounter with Kump.

"And now those women have come to spend the rest of the day," she added lugubriously, after they had all laughed over the history. "Mr. Godfrey says they are horrid. Are they, Sharley?"

Sharley and Jack exchanged significant glances, the former laughing again as she recalled the comments to which she had just listened.

"It is n't fair to prejudice Agnes, Jack," she said. "Let her judge for herself."

"It will not take many minutes for her to do

that," Jack Godfrey replied, "and she will think just as we do. Have n't they been going for me, Sharley, in their usual style? You might as well own up. You know it can't hurt my feelings, though it 's a great relief to theirs."

"There has been a little discussion, Jack," Sharley said slowly, "concerning the Slocum horse and buggy. The owners appear to hold you responsible, though Miss Angeline has sent Bob for it, and—"

"You don't mean that Bob did n't put the horse up?" Jack exclaimed, springing to his feet.

"So it seems. The horse has made way with himself and the buggy, at any rate."

"And the horrid Slocums can't go home if they want to!" Agnes cried.

"It shan't be for want of a vehicle, Miss Haliburton," and Jack picked up his hat as he spoke. "Come, Sharley, I'll hunt up the buggy while you look for the boy," and taking leave of Miss Haliburton, he went off on his errand, more vexed with himself, Bob, and the objectionable Slocums, than was indicated by his manner.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. MYRON DAVIDGE, sitting in an immense arm-chair which had the effect of making his figure appear even more slender than it really was, had a far-off expression in his eyes, though they were fixed upon a book he was holding in his hands.

“‘And a little child shall lead them.’”

He said the words very slowly, as, rousing himself at last from his long reverie, he glanced at the young girl lying on the lounge opposite.

“I often think of that expressive metaphor when I think of you, Miss Winnie. I wonder if, after all, yours is the divine philosophy. You believe in something. I do not. What an enormous difference!”

“You were not so fortunate as I in being taught to believe,” Winnie said gently.

“Your education in that respect is a constant surprise to me. Where did you get it?”

"From my mother," Winnie answered reverently.

"And she got it from hers, I suppose. It is the mothers who make the world, they say."

"No. Her mother died when she was quite small. Her sister, my aunt Melinda, brought her up. I can remember Aunt Melinda myself," she went on. "She was my ideal of an angel, though she was bent, and withered, and wore spectacles—"

"Where was the angel?" the doctor asked, with a slight smile, as Winnie paused in a sort of reverie.

"Where it was as independent of the flesh and blood as the clothes she wore. They were not Aunt Melinda, neither were the brown, wrinkled face and hands. This body is only our earthly tabernacle, you know."

"Yes, it certainly is that, and I know nothing about any other. Did Aunt Melinda have one of those model mothers in her turn?"

"I don't know about that. But she had something, years before I was born, that is called a great educator, Dr. Davidge."

"And that was—?"

"A great trouble."

"Nonsense, Miss Winnie!"

For a moment the doctor looked angry as well as contemptuous. Winifred did not appear in the least disturbed.

"You always want proofs—convincing evidence, you call it—before you accept anything as a fact. Isn't there proof enough all about us that trouble develops the best there is in us?"

"What proof do you find?" the doctor asked in his turn.

"I believe my Aunt Melinda would have been proof enough for me if I had never had any other."

"Please prove to me, my dear Miss Winnie, that she would not have been so good a woman if she had been a happier one."

Winifred's face kept its gravity, though the twinkle came gradually into her eyes.

"I can't do that, Dr. Davidge."

"So I thought."

"But I can prove something else," she said confidently, after a little hesitation, "that hap-

piness and prosperity—having your own way, you know, in everything—does not improve any one.”

“How so?”

“Such people—all that I’ve known, I mean—were selfish and thoughtless, sometimes cruel and unjust, and—”

She spoke slowly, and at last stopped altogether.

“But I must ask you to prove that they would have been any less selfish, thoughtless, or cruel, if they had not had their own way.”

Winifred shook her head a little sadly.

“I can’t do that, either,” she said.

“In which case I am just as poorly off for proofs as I was before, Miss Winnie. It is a matter of opinion, you see, after all; not a matter of fact.”

“I’ve had a great deal of time for thinking since I’ve been lying here,” Winnie said, after a long pause between them. “You might not call it reasoning, but I’ve tried to reason, too, as well as I could. I’ve thought a great deal about you, Dr. Davidge.”

"About me !"

He stirred a little, looking at her with some surprise.

"I think a doctor has the greatest opportunity in the world for doing good," she continued.

"I try to be faithful to my profession," he responded coldly.

"But you have no heart in it, you say. You believe that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth."

"Life is too full of trouble, Miss Winnie—the persons who have their way in everything being too few to be worth counting—to be particularly desirable."

"Yet you do your best to save the lives of your patients?"

Dr. Davidge shrugged his shoulders. The shadow of one of his rare smiles just touched his mouth and lingered there.

"And consequently, you argue, I show them no kindness in so doing. But I'm not at liberty to kill any one, and should not avail myself of the privilege if I were. Most men are will-

ing—are very anxious—to live, and no one wants to suffer pain. I do my best to relieve the suffering and save the life. If I save it simply for greater suffering—” he made an expressive gesture—“ I hold myself in no way responsible. I’ve done my duty as I understand it. Miss Angeline has not gone yet ? ” he asked, after an interval of silence which Winnie did not seem disposed to break.

“ Oh, no. She goes over to the deacon’s every few days, to Mrs. Barker’s every evening, and at least twice a day gives notice that she intends to leave us for all time.”

“ While you are longing to be about again for the sake of those you both feel must be taken care of ? ”

“ Yes, indeed. You can’t wonder at that.”

“ Do you never think of your own enjoyment ? ” he inquired, somewhat curiously, “ of what comfort you could have yourself if you were well and strong again ? ”

“ Why, that would be my comfort—all the enjoyment I should want—now.” She made quite a pause between the last two words—

"I could n't have said that a year ago, Dr. Davidge."

"So you infer that you are growing in grace?"


"I try to believe so—and I try to grow. But it's dreadfully hard work, doctor, sometimes, and—" Her lip quivered, just enough to check the remaining words.

Dr. Davidge was watching her, but he did not speak. Instead, he rose quickly, placed his hand firmly on her head, where he held it for half a minute or more, then took his hat from the table.

"Remember," he said, as he laid aside the book which he had been holding while he talked, "if it is as pleasant to-morrow, and you are feeling as well, I shall come to take you to drive."

He went away without any further words, but there was a strange expression on his face as he unfastened his horse and stepped into the buggy. He did not attempt to gather up the reins. They remained as he had left them, fastened around the dashboard, and the horse jogged along at a leisurely pace towards home.

Myron Davidge was a solitary man as well



as an unhappy one. The first fact was evident to everybody, though it was only among a few that his morbid mental condition was equally well known. He had left Duxberry years before, a very promising and exceedingly popular young man, to enter college. His graduation with high honors, his beginning of a professional career, his marriage a year or two later, were all known to the Duxberry residents, though his home was in a distant city and he made few visits to the village. Suddenly—and several years after anything had been heard of him—he reappeared, stepped into the niche left vacant by the death of the favorite Duxberry doctor, and announced his intention of remaining. Every one who remembered him welcomed him warmly; though it would have been unnatural if his coming alone, and volunteering no information about himself or his affairs, had not excited a great deal of gossip.

He lived in the handsomest house in Duxberry—the one which had been owned by his predecessor—with a man-servant whom he had procured no one knew where. It was certainly—

from no lack of effort on the part of the villagers that nothing could be learned from this individual concerning himself or his employer. So far as such information went, he might have been deaf and dumb. He combined the positions of cook, housekeeper, and gardener, and, from outward indications, was equal to each one of them. Mrs. Slocum and her sister Amanda had openly acknowledged that they called upon the doctor in his office one day merely for the sake of examining the condition of such carpets and furniture as could be seen in so limited a visit. Moreover, they had delicately hinted at their need of some slight refreshment after a fatiguing walk, and were served with cake and cream, upon plates, in goblets, and with napkins, that they declared would not have disgraced any housekeeper in Duxberry. They had left the house quite as much mystified, and with just as little medicine as they had entered it, their physician apparently appreciating and humoring the object of the call.

Dr. Davidge was thinking of many things as he drove slowly along that afternoon. But

more than anything he thought—the words beating through and through his tired brain with relentless persistency—of the lines he had read in Winifred Maynard's room a little while before: —

“The hero is not fed on sweets,
Daily his own heart he eats;
Chambers of the great are jails,
And headwinds right for royal sails.”

And Winnie?

It had been one of her discouraged days. She had looked forward with some pleasure to Dr. Davidge's call, but it had proved a most disappointing one. She picked up the book he had laid aside, and opened it again at those stirring lines. But the ring of the bold, strong words had gone out of them. She wondered how they could ever have sounded like the trumpet-call to conflict and victory. Heroism was no doubt a very good thing—a very grand thing, but more than anything just then she craved the sweets which are denied to the hero. Her chamber was indeed a jail. She found no greatness in herself or her surroundings to reconcile her to her limitations, and—in transition

from the passive to the active metaphor—she had so long struggled against wind and tide that she was worn out with the effort. Theory and practice did not always go side by side with Winifred Maynard any more than with other persons, though she tried harder than many to reconcile them, and her failure was less evident. The clouds settled down more heavily as the afternoon wore on, and before the early twilight Winnie was indulging herself in that occupation known by the peculiar expression, “a good cry.”

Her cousin Agnes came in suddenly, too absorbed at that moment with her own pleasure to notice Winnie’s mood, even if the dusk had not settled in the room. She held an open letter in her hand and danced with it beside her cousin’s lounge.

“News from father!” she exclaimed exultantly. “He will be here on the twenty-fifth. If you were only able to go to Saratoga with me, Winnie, I should be just perfectly happy!” and if she were anything less than perfectly happy at that moment, the radiant and expressive face gave no sign of the fact.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. JOHN HALIBURTON arrived in Duxberry at the time designated, a fact which was known throughout the village within three hours of his appearance at the railroad station.

He was a very large and a very handsome man,—one of the kind who seem to fill every room which they enter, and monopolize the attention of every person in it. The parlor of the Maynard farmhouse never seemed so small as when pervaded by John Haliburton's imposing presence.

Agnes had the profoundest love, as well as admiration, for her father. She gazed at him with adoring eyes, listening intently as he described in his easy, fascinating manner his hurried trip abroad.

"And you know you longed all the time to have me with you," Agnes said, smiling. "When are you going again, sir, and going to take me

with you? I can be ready, you know, at an hour's notice."

"My plans were never more unsettled than they are at present," her father said in reply. "I think I see an opening in London that will—"

"Will take you back there?" Agnes inquired eagerly.

"Perhaps so, but at any rate that there's a tremendous amount of money in. The only trouble is that I must go more slowly than suits me. I've got too much invested in other directions, and if the market does n't—you're enjoying yourself here, are n't you?" he suddenly interrupted himself to inquire.

"Enjoying myself!" Agnes repeated, with a wry face, at which her father laughed. "Oh, yes! Excessively! There's so much to enjoy, you see! But I'm not having such a remarkably good time that I can't tear myself away to go with you, father."

"Well, now, there's just the trouble," her father said mysteriously, and a little more slowly than he usually talked.

"The trouble?" Agnes repeated, with vague

idea of his meaning. "It won't trouble me much to leave Duxberry, if that's what you're talking about."

"But you see," he began in explanation, "things are so complicated just at present that I—at any rate you'd be willing to stay here a little while longer, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, father!"

"I shall have to go to Pennsylvania right off. I thought at first I'd have to write you instead of coming to Duxberry, for time's precious with me, you know, always. The strikes among the miners have worked mischief for us, and the coal market is"—

"I don't see what the coal market has to do with it," Agnes interrupted with great impatience. "You never talked about coal markets and money markets till this summer. Something must be all wrong somehow."

"There's nothing wrong, child," her father replied, a little impatient in his turn, "nothing, I mean, that can't be set right in a very few days or weeks. Sometimes twenty-four hours—even less time than that—changes the whole

financial situation. But a man must keep his eyes open and be on hand, especially where large interests are involved, as in my case."

"But I should n't think I need to stay in Duxberry, even if you do go to Pennsylvania. The Duncans are at Saratoga this summer, as they were last year. I had a letter from Bell Duncan day before yesterday, asking me when I was coming; and I could wait for you there just as well as here—and a good deal more comfortably," she concluded with emphasis.

John Haliburton looked at his daughter with great tenderness. She was dearer to him than anything else in the world. For the first time in his life he had been compelled to deny her some things which she coveted, and he must do it again. It was a hard task for the affectionate, indulgent father, and self-denial was no easy thing to the child. She had never been taught anything of that kind in Creighton Academy or elsewhere, and instruction in that particular branch of moral philosophy becomes difficult in proportion to its delay.

"If I could have a day or two in New York for shopping it would be such a comfort!" Agnes went on, as her father did not speak. "I came away in such a hurry this summer that I did n't feel half ready. But I'd rather go to Saratoga shabby, than not go at all."

"Then you certainly must be anxious," her father said with a half smile, looking anxious himself, though from a far different cause.

Little Mary Maynard came shyly into the room with a message, which she delivered from a safe position by the door.

"Winnie says she wants you both to come in and see her now, Uncle John. She's put on her pretty wrapper on purpose," the child added on her own responsibility, somewhat emboldened by the gentleman's smile.

John Haliburton and his niece fairly represented the extremes of physical as well as of social and spiritual life. Some such thought was in the minds of each of them as they met in the quiet little room. The man of the world was profoundly touched as he looked into the clear, brave eyes of the young girl, while she

fully understood and appreciated the sympathy which she saw in his.

"Yet you have come to take Agnes away from me," she said in what was intended for a reproachful tone.

"I hope Agnes has done everything in her power to make it pleasanter for you since she came."

"Yes, indeed, and I never felt so selfish in my life."

Though the remark was not a particularly clear one, it needed no interpretation. But Agnes felt a sudden pang. It was a sensation she had experienced several times since living with her cousin Winnie. A question took instant and definite shape in her mind—"What have I done to make it pleasanter for her? I could have done so much." Never before had she so fully realized it.

"She has told me a great deal that was interesting about her New York life and her city friends," Winnie remarked, almost as if in answer to Agnes's mental question. "It is all new and strange to me, of course. I never tire of

hearing about it, or asking questions—conundrums she calls them, sometimes. And no doubt they are queer ones—but I know so little about that kind of life.”

Agnes wondered if Winnie could specify anything else which had been done “to make it pleasant for her.” And those long talks—why, it was for the enjoyment she herself found in them—quite as much as for any pleasure they gave Winnie—that she had “told her so much that was interesting.” Agnes felt mean and selfish—consequently uncomfortable. It was strange how often Winnie had that effect upon her, though she never said a word or did a single thing that—

“I’ve felt so sorry on Agnes’s account,” Winnie was saying, “that I could do nothing at all to make her visit pleasant. Duxberry is dull enough nowadays, still if I could get around as I used to, it would n’t have been quite so stupid for her.”

“You’ve not outgrown your early propensities, I see, Winnie,” Mr. Haliburton remarked kindly.

"What do you mean by that, father?" Agnes inquired, seeing by the expression of Winnie's face that she was equally in the dark.

"Oh, to think of everybody else before herself; to sympathize with their troubles so much as to forget all about her own. I remember when you were a very little lady—not older than Mary is now—how you cried because your aunt Melinda cut her hand, and you didn't remember till you went to bed that night that you'd broken your doll's head and had n't eaten anything all day long. I suppose you forget now occasionally whether you've had your dinner in wondering whether the rest of the family are provided with theirs."

Winnie shook her head with a smile.

"I should never have that anxiety, with Aunt Angeline managing things."

"Your Aunt Angeline is not fond of me, you know."

Winnie's smile broke into a laugh. Agnes looked interested. She had suspected as much.

"Yet I doubt if you could find any one in Dux-

berry more ready to do you a favor, if you should want one."

" Oh, yes, I'm quite familiar with her reputation. But I shall be very careful not to ask her until we have settled the old scores between us. You'll be glad to know that I can do it within the very next year at the longest."

" Yes, I'm very glad. Aunt Angeline never forgets it—or lets any one else."

Agnes determined to ask her father for an explanation at the first opportunity. He had just begun on another subject when callers arrived—two young ladies to see Winnie and Agnes. Mr. Haliburton rose to go.

" Your father's in the barn, and I want a little talk with him. I'll come in again, Winnie, to-night, or to-morrow morning, as you please."

Agnes looked longingly after her father as he went out of the room, feeling quite heroic and self-sacrificing as she devoted herself to the entertainment of the new arrivals, a task she would gladly have left wholly to Winnie.

Elnathan Maynard was busy repairing some farming tools. He looked up with an expression

of pleasure as the majestic figure of his brother-in-law darkened the doorway.

"Come in, come in, John," he said heartily. "I don't s'pose you'll mind the litter. It's the kind of work that has to be done, you know."

He cleared a little bench as he spoke, and pushed it towards him. John Haliburton took the proffered seat, watching Mr. Maynard as he resumed his work.

"Do you never get tired of it and want a change, Nathan?" he asked at length and as if from some profound thought concerning the farmer's occupation.

"Queer, John, but at that very minute I had just such a question in my mind about you! Only I should have said, Do you never get tired of it and want to settle down? There's an immense difference in our kinds of life, but on the whole I'm pretty well satisfied with mine. Lucky for me, you might say, for I have no choice in the matter."

"Well, I'll confess that sometimes the settling-down, as you call it, does look a little tempting,

but it's only when I've had a run of hard luck—which does n't happen often. I should get uneasy again in a month—I'm sure of it."

"No doubt. It all depends on what one's used to, I suppose."

"I fully expected, Nathan, that I could do something for you before this time. But things have been so extremely uncertain—and they are now, for that matter. I made a turn on wheat last spring that promised to bring everything up even, but the corner in Chicago—"

"You'd be surprised, John, and I'm pretty sure disgusted, if you had any idea how little I understand about such matters. I must be downright stupid, for I can't get them through my head even when I read explanations in the newspapers, as I do sometimes, just for curiosity."

"Oh, one must be on 'Change and on the street—practically—to have a clear idea of the moves of the game. It's a bewildering one, sometimes, even to the initiated. But I'm pretty sure, now, of straightening things out to my satisfaction within a very few months. It's only just for the present that I'm desperately cramped.

L

I see two or three fine openings, and if nothing happens to upset my calculations, I can make a profitable turn during that time, and get things on a more substantial basis. I suppose Agnes can stay here a while longer ? ”

“ Why, of course she can stay,” Mr. Maynard answered. “ We ’d be glad to have her if she wants to.”

“ She does n’t want to—exactly,” Mr. Haliburton attempted to explain, feeling an awkwardness very unusual to him. “ That is, she ’s set her heart on going to Saratoga,—it ’s rather gayer there for a young girl, you know,—and it ’s going to be a great disappointment. But there are some reasons why I ’d like to have her stay here for two or three weeks longer. You understand she ’s not here as a visitor, Nathan, anyway. Of course I expect to—”

Mr. Maynard made a gesture.

“ Not a word about that, John, not a word ! ” he exclaimed, evidently understanding as well as resenting the unfinished statement. “ You know perfectly well that Agnes is more than welcome to stay here just as long as she can

content herself—or you want to leave her,” he concluded on second thought.

“She and Winnie seem very fond of each other.”

“So they are—there’s no doubt of it.”

“And I’d be glad, Nathan, to see Agnes a little more like her cousin in some things. Winnie is so unselfish,—so considerate of others. She always was, even as a little child.”

“Then it’s no particular credit to her, I suppose,” Mr. Maynard said with a smile. “She certainly did not lack good examples in those particulars—her mother and Melinda.” The smile faded at the last words. The sentence ended with a little sigh. John Haliburton’s face was very grave also.

“If Agnes could only have had her mother all these years, Nathan!” he said, with a great yearning in his tone. “She’d have been more like Winnie then; she could n’t have helped it.”

“Yet Agnes is a very lovely girl, John,” Mr. Maynard said warmly, “and a very affectionate one—a little spoiled, perhaps, by indulgence.

She 's had her own way, you know, pretty completely, and it has naturally made her a little more selfish than—”

“Mrs. Backsom, she says as how you 're to come inter supper, you an' Mr. Rollin'stone. That 's what she said,” and Bob Gridley, having delivered the message from the barn doorway, went onward with the calm consciousness of duty done.

Apparently neither of his hearers noticed the words, so much as the sense, of his communication; but the reason for the new name would not have been hard to find if they had felt the least curiosity on the subject.

Amanda Slocum had stepped into the house a few minutes before to learn fuller particulars of John Haliburton's arrival than she could gather anywhere else in the village. Bob had overheard a few words of the conversation.

“He 's as big as ever?” Mrs. Slocum had inquired.

“As big as ever, and just as much of a rollingstone as ever, with as little moss on him, too, if I 'm any judge.”

“Rollin’ stone! That would ‘be a fust-rate name for him, would n’t it?”

“That is his name—if it ever belonged to any man in this world,” Miss Bascom stated emphatically, and Bob forthwith adopted and applied it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE disappointment of Agnes Haliburton when she found that she must remain still longer in Duxberry was one of the greatest she had ever experienced. Lest the statement should seem like an exaggeration, it should be borne in mind that everything in human life is great or small by contrast and comparison. She had once been disappointed in a pair of gloves her father had sent her for a party. They had four buttons instead of six, as she had particularly specified, and she had cried for half an hour over the deficiency. Life had seemed a burden, and the universe a dreary waste on account of the missing buttons. To a larger nature and a wider experience, such a trial would, of course, be the merest triviality. To Agnes, who had never known a greater one, it seemed little less than a tragedy.

Her father's regret for the disagreeable necessity forced upon him by circumstances, his explanations of the present difficulty, and promises for future indulgence, did something towards reconciling Agnes to the change of plan which she found so annoying. She saw him leave Duxberry in quite a composed frame of mind, and heroically set herself to work to make the best of the situation. He was to return for her in three weeks at the latest, and possibly sooner.

Agnes had anticipated so short a visit in Duxberry, and had felt so little interest in its population, that she had returned none of the calls which had been made upon her, nor attempted to create for herself any special interests. The additional three weeks stretched out before her to such an interminable length that in sheer desperation she decided to improve her few social opportunities, and see if it were possible that any good thing could come out of Duxberry or Duxberry people.

She had made but one visit to Sharley's—school, notwithstanding Sharley's repeated invi—

tations ; and even that one was more in intention than in reality. She had reached the little school-house as the scholars were being dismissed, and though she had gone in and sat with Sharley for a few minutes, neither of them felt that the call was in any sense a call upon the school, which was what Sharley wanted.

Agnes made a sudden resolution to gratify her friend, and at the same time see if there were any entertainment to be found for herself by such a visit as had been proposed. To that end she started one morning with Charlie and Mary Maynard, Bob Gridley attaching himself to the party at intervals. The intervening spaces of time were devoted to a series of the most astonishing gymnastic exercises by the roadside, expressive of his delight at the presence of "Miss Harry Burton."

Sharley Kenyon's gratification was apparently as great as Bob's, though manifested in a less vehement manner ; and even before the session had fairly begun Agnes found herself absorbed in the study of the different children, none of whom resembled the one described by the mel-

ancholy Jacques, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school." They rushed chattering into the school-house as if glad to get to it, and anxious to see who should enter first. At least a dozen of them brought floral contributions to the teacher's desk—from a handful of daisies or dandelions plucked from the wayside, to choice blossoms from the owner's well-kept garden. It was no small amusement to Agnes to hear Sharley's expressions of thanks to the small and enthusiastic givers, and watch the ingenious way in which she displayed each gift upon her desk to the best advantage. Bob Gridley's contribution that particular morning consisted of an enormous bunch of poppies, suggestive, in color and size, of the warmth and extent of his devotion.

Agnes was startled by the sudden stillness which fell upon the noisy group at the touch of the teacher's bell. In some inexplicable manner each pupil seemed to subside into his allotted seat in a way which instantly produced order out of chaos. A moment before she would have said that such a speedy change could not pos-

sibly have been brought about by anything less than a comprehensive stroke of paralysis.

"This morning," Sharley began without any formal opening of the school or introduction of her subject, "I counted fifteen rows on the largest spider-web I found on my way to school."

There was an involuntary and quickly suppressed "Whew!" from one of the pupils, and several hands were quickly raised.

"Neddie Thomas," Sharley called out, selecting first the smallest boy among them.

"I only found eleven," he replied.

"And I nine," announced another, responding to Sharley's nod.

"I only found five," the fourth pupil, a girl, responded ruefully; "I did n't see any big webs anywhere."

"Fifteen, eleven, nine, five," Sharley repeated. "Now who can tell me whether the rows on spiders' webs are always in uneven numbers or not?"

Every hand that had been raised was down again. More than one face assumed a thoughtful look.

"We know that the rows of kernels on an ear of corn are always even," Sharley pursued. "Some of you hunted a week, you know, to find one with an odd row. Tommy Stone was to tell us this morning all he could learn about spiders. Now, Tommy."

Tommy, quite as ready as his auditors, rose and delivered the following:—

"In some tropical countries the spiders are so big that they catch birds, very little ones, as well as flies and things. Some spiders have six eyes, some have two, but most all spiders have more 'n two. They put their eggs in a cocoon, and sometimes almost two thousand eggs have been found in just one of them. Sometimes spiders fight and tear off each others' limbs. Spiders' webs are very nice for making the blood stop when you've cut your finger or anything."

"Just think, children," Sharley said, as he concluded, "what a wonderful piece of work a spider's web is, and how patiently he repairs it when the wind breaks it or some one brushes it aside. It takes us only a second to destroy

what the spider has labored over for hours; and I suppose he feels discouraged when he sees it,—as we should if some one rubbed out a whole slate full of sums we had spent half a day over.”

Sharley, as she talked, took up the little Bible which lay upon the desk, and slowly turned over the leaves, beginning to read at the middle of the 104th Psalm.

“The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted;

“Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.”

She read only a few verses, a fact which caused her hearers to wish, when she ended, that she would keep on through just a few more.

This exercise over, the regular work of the day began by the reading lesson of the first class, composed of the most advanced pupils in the school. A few of them were almost as old and quite as large as their teacher. To Agnes's surprise, Sharley gave a newspaper to a very tall girl at the head of the class, indicating

the article she was desired to read. It was a report of a trip up the Hudson River made by children selected as recipients of that noble charity, "The Fresh Air Fund." The paper was passed down the class, each reading a paragraph or a portion of one, until the article was finished. Sharley asked a few questions concerning the location, length, and general characteristics of the Hudson, then improvised a spelling lesson from the words they had just read. A few sentences were copied upon the blackboard and used as illustrations of certain points in grammar and rhetoric. These various matters disposed of, some of the class were required, while others were reciting, to write out an abstract of the reading-lesson, the exercise serving for the weekly composition.

Sharley showed a vast amount of ingenuity and originality in all the different topics which were supposed to form the absorbing interests of the district school. Even the matter-of-fact multiplication table became less prosaic, though quite as profitable, when its concise statements were given in the form of a mathematical match,

each pupil anxious to keep his side standing as long as possible, and his interest increasing in proportion to the difficulty of the questions. Geography and history were made into regular games, quite as interesting as that of "Authors," and conducted somewhat in the same way. For the first time in her life Agnes found herself realizing that Columbus was as tangible a person once as Queen Victoria, and the great trees of California as real as the stone walls of Duxberry.

But what surprised her most of all was the fact that there seemed so little need of discipline of any sort. The most mischievous boys—those from whom she expected, judging from their faces and general appearance, open riot and rebellion—sat with mouth, as well as eyes, wide open, as if they absorbed instruction through the same channel as they did their food. Bob Gridley squirmed and wriggled over his slate, with his tongue alternately thrust into his cheek and between his teeth as if the most fascinating object in the universe was the copy before him, impressing upon his youthful mind the great truth, "An island is a body of land surrounded

by water." It was a significant fact that his teacher had made sure of his understanding the long word of three syllables before she set him to copy it.

Only one pupil seemed to be out of sorts, and indisposed to avail himself of his educational privileges. He was an awkward, shambling fellow about fourteen years old, with a sinister face and shock head of black hair. More than once Agnes detected him in sly manoeuvres, flipping beans across the school-house, rubbing out the work upon the slates of his neighbors, and disconcerting the little boys and girls by hideous faces made at them whenever they looked—as by some fatal fascination they often did—in his direction. It was plain that Sharley also saw all that was going on, though she merely protected his victims by changing their seats and the like, saying nothing to the defiant aggressor.

When school was dismissed, and the pupils, growing again as noisy and frolicsome as before the session opened, rushed off in different directions, Agnes felt as if she had passed through

a very novel experience, as well as an interesting and exciting one.

"I had no idea things went on in this way!" was her first exclamation to Sharley when they were left alone.

The young teacher looked very tired. Her face was flushed. She pushed her hair back from her temples and leaned her head on her hands, her elbows on the desk.

"What sort of an idea did you have?" she asked Agnes, smiling at the eager expression on her friend's face. It had seldom looked so animated during her stay in Duxberry.

"Well, in the first place, I supposed you had all you could possibly do to keep these youngsters in any sort of order. Then you have such a queer way of teaching—you seem to think a blackboard and a piece of chalk of a good deal more consequence than their school-books. And who ever heard of a newspaper for a reading lesson?"

Sharley's smile broadened.

"What else, Agnes?" she asked. "You know I'm a novice in this business, and I was n't

in school as long as you were. Criticisms are in order, and if you see any way in which—”

“Oh, it is n’t that!” Agnes exclaimed quickly, anxious not to be misunderstood. “I think your way is just perfectly splendid, only it’s so different from what I expected to see. Half the time it did n’t seem one bit like a school. Why did n’t you read the Bible the first thing this morning instead of beginning with that talk about spiders?”

Sharley waited a moment before she spoke. She seemed to be thinking of many things.

“I believe,” she said slowly at last, “in letting the children feel as free as possible before and after school. They made a tremendous noise this morning, but, because I did not restrain it in the least, were all the more ready to quiet down when the bell rang. But somehow it never seemed to me quite consistent to expect them to give instant attention to any sacred subject just after all that uproar.”

“And so you arranged a sort of inclined plane for them?” laughed Agnes, as Sharley paused a moment.

"A step-ladder is a better expression," Sharley responded. "I'm very fond of natural history, but I know nothing whatever about it. Some of my scholars know more than I do. Now, my question this morning, about the rows in spiders' webs—it may have been the veriest nonsense as far as I know, but I hope it was n't. I must find out right away. I try to interest them in the common and simple things they see all about them, and I certainly learn by teaching. Every morning for some time we've been talking about birds; we've nearly exhausted spiders, and next are to find out all we can about bees. I've a few books of reference, and the school selects one pupil each day to read up on the subject and report to us, as Tommy Stone did this morning."

Agnes was profoundly interested, but she had not forgotten her original question. "So the reason why you begin with that instead of—"

"Exactly! Once the hardest part of my day—I mean one of the hardest parts—was the reading from the Bible in opening the school. One of the committee told me I had better read

it through in order, and I began at the beginning. But there was n't an individual among them who had the slightest interest in what I read. Nearly every one of them was in some sort of disorder. I've had to stop sometimes at almost every verse before I could get through a chapter," and Sharley made a wry face at the recollection.

"They were quiet enough this morning."

"Yes. And I long ago gave up reading tables of genealogy to a lot of wide-awake, active children. Now I select the parts that will interest them, and a little talk about God's work and love and care, as displayed in birds' nests and honeycomb,—well, you see, it makes them a great deal more ready and interested to hear what the Bible has to say about the same things."

"Sure enough!" Agnes said deliberately, drawing a long breath. "But how do you manage to make them *like* their work? Most school children seem to hate it. I'm sure I always did."

"You enjoyed embroidering those violets on white satin the other day for a wedding

present?" was Sharley's apparently irrelevant reply.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Why? What a question! I'm fond of embroidery anyway, and Bell Duncan is one of my special friends. I know the cushion will please her, and—but I'm sure I don't see what the cushion has to do with my question, Sharley."

"Only because it illustrates a principle,—the same one, you see. Bob Gridley is as much interested in shaping his letters to look like his copy, as you are in working the flowers to look like your pattern; and he's anxious to please me. It's a difference in taste, to be sure, but the principle is there just the same, is n't it?"

Agnes did not seem quite ready to answer.

"Think of all the questions little children ask, all the time, too. Why do they? There must be a natural reason for it. I suppose it's the natural desire for knowledge; some might call it curiosity, but even curiosity is not an objectionable thing, so far as I can see, when it is properly exercised. If there were no curiosity

in the world, there would be no knowledge, I suppose. Somebody must have felt a great deal of curiosity about the starry heavens, or he never would have tried to make a telescope."

Sharley was growing excited. She sat erect, and though her cheeks were still flushed, the tired look had left her face, and her eyes shone.

"You see, Agnes, it's just like talking my thoughts out loud to say these things to you," she pursued, encouraged by the absorbed look in Agnes's face, "and I've thought about so many things since I began to teach. I talk a good deal with Winnie and a good deal more with Lon Morse. Lon is very practical, more so than Winnie. I take her philosophy and theories to Lon, and he tells me how to put them in practice."

"And you have no ideas of your own?"

"Oh, I did n't say that exactly. I have one idea that I try to work out in a hundred different ways,—that is, to keep the scholars interested in what they do. The moment they cease to be interested,—well, that is the end of everything. Look out then for spit-balls and beans,

laughing, whispering, and everything else that misdirected energy and ingenuity can lead enterprising young folks to invent," and Sharley sighed as if she had learned by experience the force of the truth she was proclaiming.

"Who was that ugly-looking boy—the one who—"

"You mean Fixy Dullwedge. He is—"

"What!" exclaimed Agnes, struck by the extraordinary name.

Sharley laughed as she repeated it.

"One is seldom named so appropriately, at any rate," she said. "He belongs to a French family. Fixy is supposed to be a substitute for Felix, but the surname has been corrupted from nobody knows what. The trouble with that boy is that I have not yet been able to discover what he cares about, if he cares about anything."

"Do you never punish him for his antics in any way?"

"Oh, I've tried various devices. Really you can't imagine what a trial he is to me. I've got about discouraged with him. I did try at

first various kinds of punishments, but none of them reached the case. What I most want to do is to make him see how he is hurting himself by his idleness and mischief."

"Well, I wish you success in your undertaking." Agnes remarked, in a tone which said as plainly as any words could have done how hopeless she considered it.

"And about the newspaper," Sharley said, with sudden thought, "does n't it seem reasonable that we would all be more interested in what was read to-day than in something—"

"Why, of course," Agnes interrupted heartily. "It was the most fascinating reading lesson I ever heard. I found myself holding my breath while I was listening to the account of those poor little children, and I judged from their appearance that a good many of the scholars did the same thing. What made you think of that plan in the first place, Sharley?"

"Why, because I found that I must keep them interested, as I said, and—this I hope to find out by experience—children cannot be interested in theories and abstractions

dead letters. Something awake and vital and human—that's what they want, and must have, if they get anything worth having. I imagine you would have smiled, Agnes, if you could have seen me when I began to teach geography. I found out soon enough that words mean very little to children, though they can learn them readily enough. I had to resort to my ingenuity. I made mud pies, or at any rate the process was very similar, and manufactured islands, capes, and peninsulas, as you would biscuits for tea. I fixed up some mountains and cut some very respectable channels for rivers. The bays and gulfs made themselves, and all these different geographical divisions clustered around the side of a big washtub."

Sharley stopped long enough to laugh heartily at the remembrance of this unique object lesson. Agnes made a gesture for her to hurry on. She was greatly interested.

"I could n't manage volcanoes, of course, and deserts bothered me more than they were worth. I don't believe I could have been satisfied

with a desert anyhow, if I could n't have had an oasis, a palm-tree, and a camel or two. Well, after I had fixed those definitions in their heads, I began by filling up the rivers, which naturally ran into the gulfs and bays, and thereby made a very decent ocean. Don't you see?"

Agnes saw, or at least she indicated as much by a nod of the head.

"I should never have thought of such a thing as that," she said, "if I'd lived five hundred years. I always supposed that a teacher had nothing to do but keep children from raising the roof while she heard them recite their lessons."

"Reciting lessons is a very different affair from learning them," Sharley replied, "and how can they learn unless they are taught? That is the work of a teacher, it seems to me. Books cannot do it wholly, though some teachers seem to think so."

"But I should suppose you'd have to lie awake nights, Sharley, to invent all your ways and means, and with such a conglomeration of a school, too!"

"Yes, I admit that it does take an immense amount of calculation, and it is work, there's no denying that. Sometimes I get so tired and so discouraged I don't know what to do."

She spread out a quantity of copy-books as she spoke.

"I guess you have had enough of school for one day, Agnes. You need n't wait for me. I shall not go home for an hour yet. I've got to set copies in all these for to-morrow."

Agnes could have helped her, and thereby reduced the time one half, if she had only happened to think of it, which she did not.

"And you make all those up out of your head, as the children say?" Agnes asked.

"That is not very difficult. I try to keep in mind the particular fact of definition which particularly troubles some particular pupil, and write it down for him to copy several dozen times. He generally learns it before he finishes the page."

Agnes made a comical grimace as she took up her hat, preparing to leave the school-house.

"There is no hope for any ignoramus who

falls into your hands," she observed. "I mean no hope of his remaining one," and, bidding Sharley good-by, she strolled leisurely down the road, on her way home.

CHAPTER IX.

A YOUNG man, whistling as he came was walking along towards Agnes. She instantly recognized Jack Godfrey, who showed evident pleasure on meeting her.

"Have you been to the school-house?" he asked. "Where is Sharley?"

"I've been spending the day with her. It has been an interesting one, I assure you. But she is not through her work yet. She's setting copies of geographical and historical statements, to be impressed upon the youthful minds of the children under her charge. When I left she was writing out a definition of a triangle, or something of that sort."

"Is that geographical or historical?" the young man asked with a laugh.

"I ought to have included the mathematical,

grammatical, and rhetorical, I suppose," Agnes said, laughing also.

Jack Godfrey was evidently hesitating. He glanced towards the school-house as he talked, then in the direction which Agnes was taking.

"With your permission, Miss Haliburton, I will walk home with you."

"But I thought that you were going to—"

"I had a little leisure, and was walking without any special object. Now I have found one, if you will allow me to follow it."

Agnes, evidently, had no objection. She had been attracted to Jack Godfrey when she first met him. She had asked Winnie a good many questions about him, and wondered that her cousin had so little to say in his favor. Not that she said anything against the young man,—that was not Winnie's way,—but from her very silence on the subject Agnes inferred that she could have said a great deal about him had she been so disposed. Winnie must certainly be prejudiced against him, she thought. He was very fine looking, and his manners were most agreeable.

"Do you feel now a great deal wiser than you did this morning?" he inquired, as they strolled along together.

"I ought to," she answered. "Anyone who could stay all day in Sharley's schoolroom and not acquire some information about something must be very dull indeed. I certainly did not expect to find half so much entertainment, either, when I decided to go."

"I fancy you went because you were in despair at finding anything more interesting. Duxberry must be very dull indeed, for you, Miss Haliburton."

"Why do you think so, Mr. Godfrey?" she asked, with a quick glance of appreciation as he made the remark.

"Oh, because everything here, people included, must be so very different from what you have been used to. I'm getting fearfully tired of Duxberry myself. It's no place for a fellow who has any ambition. I want to get to the city. I suppose there's no end of chances in New York for young men?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Agnes answered readily.

"I don't know much about business myself, but of course there must be plenty of opportunities in such a city as that."

"I've been there only once. I went down on an excursion train four summers ago. One of our Duxberry boys got into a situation there and promised to see what he could do for me, but he went out west somewhere, all of a sudden, and that was the last of it. You know I'm book-keeper in Hall's store?"

Yes, Agnes knew. She had heard so, she remembered, though her acquaintance with Hall's store was limited to an outside view of it,—a large, dingy, white building, one window displaying dry and fancy goods of various descriptions; the other filled with a miscellaneous collection of articles, including carpets, boots and shoes, boxes of soap, and frying-pans.

"We did a tremendous business before the mills went up," Jack Godfrey remarked, as if the mills had been suddenly elevated to a higher sphere of usefulness. "There was some life in Duxberry in those days, something going on all the time, no end of doings. Now—" He made

a very expressive gesture which did not need the help of any words to close his sentence intelligibly.

“My father is full of all sorts of business,” Agnes remarked after a moment’s thought. “He might know of something that would suit you. He is very fond of helping people, and no doubt he would be glad to do anything for you that he could.”

“O Miss Haliburton! That is greater good fortune than I—I should not have dared to ask so much; but I assure you I shall appreciate the kindness if you choose to do it.”

The Slocum buggy came rumbling down the road. Mrs. Amanda had her spectacles on this time. She had suspected who the young persons might be, strolling so leisurely along, and profoundly hoped that she was not mistaken—as she was not.

“I declare, ’Mandy,” the elder lady remarked, looking as closely at the couple in her turn, “ef there ain’t that Haliburton girl and Jack Godfrey agin! Sech dewin’s!”

Neither of them bowed to Agnes as they passed

her, though she acknowledged her acquaintance with them by a nod of the head proportionately as slight as the acquaintance itself. Jack seemed oblivious even of the passing of the ancient vehicle.

It rumbled on half a mile further, till it reached Mrs. Bond's house. There the ladies alighted and hitched the horse, having suddenly decided that as they "were goin' so near Sairy Jane's they might as well see about that 'ere cheese-press now as any time."

But cheese-presses did not form the immediate topic of conversation.

"How did Mary Ann like that Haliburton girl?" Mrs. Slocum inquired. "I heerd she and Annie had called on her. Has she ever been here?"

Mrs. Bond shook her head.

"Humph! That's about what I s'posed. She's too stuck up for anything. Did you know how she and Jack Godfrey was a-goin' on?"

Mrs. Bond looked interested, as no doubt her daughters, Mary Ann and Annie, would also have done, had they been present.

"There's been a good deal of talk, I know, about that young lady, but land! I never mind all I hear. It's just talk, the most of it, I haven't any doubt."

Having thus administered an indirect moral rebuke, Mrs. Bond felt conscientious and comfortable.

"What do they say about her and Jack Godfrey?" she inquired.

"Nobody don't need to *say* much," Amanda Slocum answered, with a significant pressure of her lips. "Ef you 'd 'a' seen all we have—" She shook her head as if a recital of the atrocities she had witnessed was altogether beyond her power.

"She 's jest a gallivantin' round with him half the time," Mrs. Slocum added. "'Mandy an' I we've seen 'em time an' time agin. John Haliburton was agoin' to take his daughter away with him to Niagary or some high-falutin place or 'nother. But he's been and gone, an' she's up to Elnathan Maynard's yit. Angeline she don't make no explanations, says her father's got more business somewhere, an' she's got to

wait for him. I tell 'Mandy there 's some mystery about it, sure 's you 're born ! ”

“ Agnes Haliburton, she looked contented enough, anyway,” Amanda remarked. “ We jest passed her on the road with Jack. She 'd gone out to meet him, I s'pose.”

“ Mary Ann says Miss Haliburton wears splendid clothes,” Mrs. Bond remarked. “ The day the girls called there she had on a lilac muslin—trimmed—land ! I could n't begin to tell what they said about the trimming ! ”

“ I guess 't would bother any one in Duxberry to describe her clothes,” Mrs. Slocum said, with a shrug of her shoulders. “ I'd jest like to find out how Angeline Bascom feels when she sees her a spreadin' roun' in all that style. Whose money helped pay for it I'd like to know ! But Angeline she's jest that close-mouthed when she chooses to be, you can't git nothin' out of her. She jest stood up for that girl the other day when we called there—yes, an' she 'd a-seen her goin' on with Jack Godfrey right before her face and eyes that very afternoon.”

"Oh, perhaps the girl don't mean any harm," Mrs. Bond observed, feeling conscientious again. "Does Sharley know about it?" she inquired with the usual consistency of curious human nature, recognizing, while indulging, its own weakness.

The subject was a prolific one, and a vast deal of information was imparted and acquired before the ladies separated, Mrs. Bond sharply criticising certain forms of gossip and mischief-making prevalent in the village, in which disapproval she was warmly indorsed by the Slocums.

Jack and Agnes were in no way troubled by any observation which might be made upon them, though the former had long before learned by experience the inevitable result of any Duxberry doings coming under the sharp eyes of the Slocums. They met Lon Morse a few minutes later. Jack greeted him with great heartiness. Agnes bowed in a very distant manner as they passed him.

"He's a splendid fellow!" Jack said enthusiastically, when Lon Morse was beyond hear-

ing. "He's the smartest one, too, there is in Duxberry—there's no doubt of that."

"You and Sharley seem to agree perfectly on the subject of Mr. Morse," Agnes replied with a slight laugh.

"Don't you like him?" Jack asked quickly "or don't you know him? I don't suppose you do," he concluded, answering his own question

"No, I don't know him. I've only heard Sharley talk about him a good deal. He's not my style, exactly," and she appeared to drop the subject as one not worth talking about.

Dr. Davidge was sitting with Winnie by the window as the two came into sight a little way down the road.

"Your cousin is a remarkably fine-looking girl—Miss Winnie. She dresses, too, in exquisite taste."

Winnie smiled with satisfaction as she heard the words. Agnes was not as generally appreciated as she wanted her to be. She was glad that Dr. Davidge admired her.

But the expression of his face was not one of admiration. There was a positive scowl upon

it, and he ended his visit before Agnes came into the room.

"I 've had a real enjoyable day, Winnie," she said to her cousin with great animation. "I suppose you know all about Sharley's way of doing things, but it was very novel and refreshing to me."

Her manner and the interesting style in which she related the incidents of the day proved the sincerity of her words. Winnie was highly entertained.

"Sharley is certainly born for a teacher," Agnes remarked in concluding.

"But she has chosen another life for herself already," Winnie said very quietly.

"What, Sharley!" Agnes exclaimed.

"Sharley has been engaged to Jack Godfrey, Agnes, for more than six months."

CHAPTER X.

THE three weeks which Mr. Haliburton had mentioned as the longest additional time which his daughter must spend in Duxberry had just come to a close. Mr. Maynard was reminded of the fact by a long letter from him.

"Things are going from bad to worse with me," he wrote, evidently in one of his rarely despondent moods. "I am worried and hampered on every side. Even a hundred dollars just now would work miracles for me. If you can spare me fifty, or even twenty-five, it would be a greater lift than you can imagine. Of course I shall add it to the sum total, and if I can only bridge over this hard spot, I have not a doubt that in a year at least I can square up the most of my affairs, and your claims shall be settled first of all. Angeline Bascom must certainly come in as number two.

"I have written to Agnes that I cannot come

for her at present, and cannot afford to pay any hotel bills this summer. You have no idea how I hate to disappoint the child. I wish you would talk over this matter with her, or else talk with Winnie and ask her to do it. Agnes is seventeen years old now. She will not return to school this fall, and I confess I don't exactly know my duty to her. I begin to suspect—I had my first revelation of it in my last talk with her—that she has some very impracticable notions of life; not that they would be so if I could be sure of always carrying out my schemes, but lately I must confess I've wondered somewhat how she would get along if she could n't depend upon me. I suppose I have only myself to blame for the way in which she has been brought up, but I have tried to do my best. If her mother could have lived—but what a vain regret!"

There was a good deal more in the letter; explanations—which explained nothing to Mr. Maynard—of the fluctuations of the money-market; his desire to invest in "Omaha common;" the "break in the Hannibal and St. Joseph;"

and the fact that "Oregon and Transcontinental" was at one and one-eighth the day before. Apparently the writer's spirits had risen as he wrote, for he closed the letter in his old hopeful mood; but Elnathan Maynard, holding it in his hand a long time after he had finished reading it, fell into a profound, and apparently not a very pleasant, reverie.

"Agnes Haliburton is making a salt-water fountain of herself," Miss Bascom remarked, bustling into the kitchen where Mr. Maynard sat. "I s'pose any one who could see a hole through a ladder would know what's the matter—well, I declare, Nathan, you look as if you'd got your death warrant," and she glanced at the letter in his hand. "John Haliburton has n't got money enough yet to retire from business, and wants you to lend him a little more. Is that it?"

Elnathan Maynard half smiled—or tried to do so.

"I suppose Agnes is greatly disappointed," he said quietly. "John is in trouble again—it's the same old story."

"'T won't hurt him to *stay* in, that's my opinion. He generally gets out within twenty-four hours by dragging somebody else in,—a pretty poor way, according to my notion, of getting along in the world. I'm going over to the deacon's. He's got one of his poor spells again."

Agnes Haliburton's occupation that forenoon had been correctly stated. Her father's letter was literally soaked with her tears, as she laid her head down on the table and gave way to her anger and disappointment. This was the second blow, and, unlike the first, it was not softened by any promise of future recompense.

Another letter lay near by, one from Saratoga, written by Bell Duncan. "It's the gayest summer we've had yet," the young lady wrote. "You would enjoy every hour of it. Arthur Cosgrove came yesterday, and I find knows quite as well as we do on what day to expect you. I was a little surprised at first, though I need n't have been, considering his devotion last year and your good taste at all times."

Winnie Maynard knocked softly at the door of her cousin's room. Though she had every day been gaining in strength, it was only the second time ~~that~~ she had gone so far without assistance. Miss Bascom had told her of Agnes's tribulation, and she was eager to be of service to her.

Agnes did not hear the knock, she was sobbing too violently. Winnie pressed her hand to her heart as she listened for an instant, then, pushing the door open, she went in.

"O Agnes, I'm so sorry!"

She knelt down by her, and put her arms about her. She was exhausted by the effort she had made in climbing the stairs. She was very pale, and her breath came in gasps. But Agnes had no thought for any one but herself.

"I feel abused and imposed upon," she cried hotly. "And to think that my father should treat me so! I would n't have believed it!"

"O Agnes!"

"It's very easy for you to exclaim, 'O Agnes,'" she went on. "How do you suppose you would feel in my place—and you don't

know one half of my disappointment, either. I just wonder how you would feel, Winifred Maynard."

"I should not feel as you do, Agnes," Winnie said firmly. "If your father were dead you could not show greater distress."

Something in the words seemed to give Agnes a new idea, but she cried harder than ever, if that were possible.

"I don't suppose I should feel much worse," she said defiantly, between her tears. "He writes that he may go to Europe again, and he can't take me with him, either. He wants to know if I could be contented to spend another year in school—studying French and music, or whatever I choose, until he knows more definitely about his plans! School! The idea! And he has n't sent me a single dollar since I've been in Duxberry!"

Winnie, repelled by her cousin's manner, had released her and seated herself in a low rocking-chair near by. She was looking at her most sympathetically, but at the same time a little curiously.

"You hav n't needed any money, have you?" she asked.

"I should n't have spent it here, if I had had it," Agnes answered. "But it's the first time I've not had all I wanted, and it's not very pleasant."

"If it's the first time, I should n't think you'd mind it so much," Winnie remarked. "If you had gone without it all your life, you might begin to complain now."

Agnes looked a little surprised herself. This upside-down sort of philosophy was not just what she had expected from Winnie. The force of her grief had spent itself. The brilliant complexion was streaked and mottled; the delicate nose and curving red lips uncomfortably swollen. Agnes's present appearance would certainly have created a sensation in the village, though of a different kind than usual.

"I suppose, Winnie, you think I'm perfectly horrid," she said, evidently not unwilling to talk a little. "You are so good, and so patient, and have so much to bear, and get along with so little, and—"

"There! You've said enough," Winnie interrupted.

"But I never could endure it as you do, never! I'm sure I could n't."

"Agnes," Winnie said, as her cousin grew quieter, "I wish you would tell me your ideas of the world—of life, you know. Tell me what you most want, and most want to do with yourself. You know what I mean."

"I suppose I know what you mean," Agnes replied thoughtfully. "I want to go to Saratoga just now, more than anything else in the world. Bell Duncan—you know Bell Duncan—is my most intimate friend—has written me a long letter about the gay times they're having there. It's her last summer, too, for after she's married she will live abroad, I suppose. She's engaged to an Englishman."

"But Saratoga only lasts a few weeks. After that?"

"Oh, I never care to think very far ahead. I was going into society this winter. Mrs. Duncan offered to take charge of me, and she knows everybody and goes everywhere."

"I suppose I have some idea of what society is," Winnie said, "though of course it's a very vague one. Is that all?"

"All what?"

"All you are going to do? All the object you have in mind?"

"I declare, Winnie, sometimes you look and talk like a regular old woman!"

"I've no doubt I feel, even if I don't look, twenty years, at least, older than you do," and Winnie laughed. "You can answer me just as if I were an old woman."

"Well, then, I don't see why women need to have any object in life, that is, anything in particular. All women marry,—at any rate most of them do,—and their husbands take care of them. Mrs. Duncan says there's a great deal of nonsense talked nowadays about women's work in the world."

"Then you intend to marry, Agnes, and to have a husband to take care of you. Is that it?"

"Yes," Agnes answered, with another touch of her defiant air. "I suppose you do too. All girls do."

Winnie did not immediately reply to this generalization. Agnes, meanwhile, folded up her letters and looked supremely miserable.

"But you would not think that you could marry a poor man, Agnes?"

"Mercy! I should hope not!"

"What is there in the world for the girls who must marry men without money or else not marry at all?" Winnie inquired.

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know," Agnes said, with some impatience, as if the subject from that point was of no special interest and somewhat perplexing also. "Lots of girls have no ambition," she added a moment later, as if a new idea had suddenly occurred to her, "and they're brought up to cook and do housework; and Madame Le Moyne, the French teacher at Creighton, always told us that she considered it a woman's duty to marry well, to keep in society where she could use her accomplishments, and in that way help to keep up society, and—I can't use her exact words, but that was her idea, anyway."

Winnie looked at Agnes in profound astonishment. Really, this was worse than she had expected. That all girls had ideas, vague or definite, upon the subject of love and marriage she fully recognized. That was a right and natural thing. But the financial and social conditions upon which Agnes based the whole business!

"Your idea of life, then," she said suddenly, out of a little reverie into which she had fallen, "is to do nothing, and have good times?"

"Certainly! Why not? There's no need for me to do anything, even if I knew how, and suppose all of us like good times as often as we can get them."

"But there is so much work to do in the world!" Winnie exclaimed excitedly.

Agnes said nothing. Her face, however, expressed plainly the sentiment that whoever chose to do it, might. She would not deny the general proposition, but she had no part nor lot in that matter.

"I suppose you have what you call an object in life?" Agnes said to Winnie, with sudden

animation. "Tell me about yours. That's only fair."

Winnie looked up, startled out of a train of thought, and a good deal surprised by the question.

"My mother taught me," she said, in answer, "that I must try to do all the good I could in the world."

Agnes waited for her to go on, but she appeared to have nothing to add to the definition.

"Well?"

"That's all!" and Winnie smiled as she shook her head. "It does n't seem to amount to much—to sound very great, or very brilliant, or—"

"It sounds exactly like a Sunday-school lesson," Agnes commented.

"It was certainly a lesson, and for every day in the week;" and Winnie smiled again. "It covers, too, an enormous amount of ground, as I've found out. It gives me all I want to do; but I'm willing to do it," she added quickly, "if I could only have the strength."

"You mean that you'd be perfectly willing to live here all your life, and take care of your

father and the children, and sew, and cook and see to Tom Lawton, and visit the folks in Duxberry—”

Agnes stopped short, perhaps at the expression on Winnie's face.

“But this is my home, you know, Agnes, and of course Duxberry folks seem very different to me from what they do to you.”

“And would that content you always?” Agnes pursued, more analytical than was customary with her. “I'll venture to say that you've thought how it would seem to be married and live in a home of your own with some one who idolized you, have n't you?”

“Yes,” Winnie answered, without any hesitation; “I used to think of it so much before my mother died. She and my father were devoted to each other—they were always just like lovers, so kind and thoughtful and considerate. Through all the hard places—sometimes the crops failed, or father lost money in other ways and the children were sick pretty often, and my little brother Frank died of croup,—no matter what the trouble was, they always worked to

gether, and seemed to think that nothing could be too hard to bear as long as they had each other. I did n't wonder that my mother could do so much, and kept cheerful under so many trials, when my father loved her so always. And when she died—my poor, poor father !”

Agnes did not find this exposition particularly satisfactory, though there was some touch of romance in it, after all. Poverty, hard work, trials,—none of these things entered into her matrimonial calculations.

“Uncle Nathan does n't look like an unhappy man,” she said.

“Unhappy—no. I don't think he is unhappy, not in the way you mean. He feels that my mother has gone on ahead,—‘into the kingdom, the power, and the glory,’ as one of our neighbors expressed it. He misses her every hour of his life, and he wants her—oh, how we want her ! But she has only gone out of the physical into the spiritual life, and she can't be very far away from us—she and little Frankie. Father believes—as mother did, too—that it is actually sinful for any one to be mis-

erable over things that can't be helped; to mourn over troubles until you make other folks miserable, especially when there's always so much to be grateful for."

"And I suppose you've been taught that too?"

"I'm thankful that I have. I'm only sorry that I can't make better use of the teaching. I just despair of getting to the place where I can feel all the time as father does. When I say so to him he only smiles, and tells me that it takes time. I should think it did. I'm afraid it will take all eternity for me, too."

There was a puzzled look on Agnes's face, as if Winnie had grown mysterious and hard to understand.

"You had better come down stairs with me, Agnes. I'm afraid if you stay up here by yourself—"

But Agnes had a letter to write, so Winnie left her alone. Before it was finished, she had closely covered eight pages, which were placed in an envelope addressed to Arthur A. Cosgrove, Grand Union Hotel, Saratoga, New York. To her father she did not write a word.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. JACK GODFREY, twenty-two years old, nearly six feet in height, of good figure, handsome though rather effeminate face, and wearing very good clothes every day in the week, was an exceedingly popular young man with certain of the Duxberry people. He told a great many funny stories, sang and played fairly, kept himself informed on the current topics of the day, and was really an agreeable and entertaining companion. He was a fine accountant. Ebenezer Hall, proprietor of the largest store in town, considered him invaluable in the business, as he undoubtedly was; but the amount of salary which he received was certainly out of proportion to his employer's appreciation.

He was greatly elated by his interview with Agnes Haliburton, and her promise to secure her father's interest in his behalf. He spoke of it to Sharley at the first opportunity, but was

rather piqued at the non-committal way in which she received the communication.

"Don't you think it will be a splendid thing for me—for us both, Sharley?"

"That depends," Sharley answered. "I don't know anything that would trouble me more than to have you go into his line of business, Jack. If he could find a good position for you,—something sure,—why, that would be a different thing."

"What do you call his line of business, Sharley? I thought he was a banker."

"That's what he calls himself."

"But is n't he?"

Sharley hesitated an instant.

"I really don't know. We used to think he was a very rich and prosperous man. But we know now that he's borrowed money, right and left, to help him make more, to speculate with; and the worst of it is, that he is not very particular about paying it back."

Jack looked surprised.

"Who's he borrowed of? Any one in Duxberry?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, more than one. Father was so dazzled a few years ago by his promise of what he would do for him, provided he could have one or two thousand dollars for a basis, as he called it, that the farm was mortgaged, the money advanced, and—oh, dear! I don't like to think of it. It's made misery enough for all of us."

"It's strange you never told me before."

"There was no necessity for telling anybody. Besides, everybody believes—in a way—in Mr. Haliburton. He does n't mean to cheat anybody. He was just as sure that he could make father's fortune—as sure as I am that I'm telling you about it, and he is always assuring him that every dollar will be paid in time with full interest. And he really believes it, too. No one can have the least doubt of that."

"I wish you had some of Anger Haliburton's style, Sharley," Jack said with a critical look at her after a moment's silence. "Can't you fix your hair as she does?"

"My hair!" Sharley laughed. "You know it never could be fixed any way, much less in the elaborate style of Agnes's. I used to think

you liked it, Jack, just because it was so curly and—”

“So I do,” he said impulsively, with a swift kiss on one of the shining waves. “I thought it was the loveliest hair in the world—till I saw Agnes—Miss Haliburton. I was only just thinking it would be a little change if you could braid it as she does. I want you to look better than any one else in the world, Sharley, that’s all.”

“Did you know that Tom Lawton was sick, Jack?” Sharley inquired with a sudden change of subject.

“No, I had n’t heard of it. Are you on your way to see him?” he asked, suddenly illuminated.
“Yes.”

“You’d make a first-class city missionary, Sharley. If I get into business in New York, and we live there—”

“I’ll find plenty of occupation, you think? I’ve no doubt of it.”

“Only I should want you all to myself, you know. You’d have occupation enough without looking after outside heathens.”

Jack left Sharley at the door of Mr. Maynard's house. She made a short call on Winnie, reporting to her the condition of things in the Lawton household. Tom had taken a sudden cold, was threatened with pneumonia, was very hard to take care of, from pain and impatience, judging from young Tom's report of the case, and Mrs. Lawton's hands were more than full with him and all the children. It was plain that Winnie was distressed at her inability to be of any service. Agnes, who was in her cousin's room at the time, appeared to be too much engrossed in her own thoughts even to follow the conversation between the two.

"It is one of the mysteries of life," Winnie said after Sharley had left them, "why such a woman as Mrs. Lawton should have so much trouble. She is one of the loveliest women in Duxberry. I've always wanted you to see her, Agnes."

"But she's a drunkard's wife," Agnes commented calmly, "and I heard that Tom Lawton had been in jail once for stealing. I should

think that was disgrace enough for one woman. The idea of associating with—”

“Disgrace!” Winnie repeated.

“Why, certainly. I don’t know what else you would call it, I’m sure.”

“Who took the trouble to tell you about Tom’s misfortune, Agnes?”

“Mr. Godfrey told me the other day.”

“Ah! But please tell me in what way Mrs. Lawton is responsible.”

“Why, he’s her husband, is n’t he?”

“But, Agnes, she never drank, nor stole anything. She’s as good as she can be, and tries hard to bring up her children properly. How can she be to blame for what Tom has done, or for anything he does in the future?”

“You’re so queer, Winnie! Logical is what you call it, I suppose. Of course I can’t explain how she’s responsible, but you know just as well as I do, that when there’s any such disgraceful thing in a family everybody is considered—considered disgraced,” she concluded, for want of another word.

Winnie did not pursue the subject, though

she looked as if she could, and would like to say a great deal more. Early the next forenoon Dr. Davidge drove up to the house.

"Are you particularly busy this morning, Miss Haliburton?"

It was quite a long sentence for him to address to her. Generally their intercourse was limited to the merest "Good morning," or "Good afternoon," according to the time of the day in which they chanced to meet. Dr. Davidge, to the great discomfiture of Winnie, seemed to have taken a positive dislike to Agnes, while she, on her part, had not the least desire to increase her acquaintance with him.

She hesitated a moment before answering the doctor's question. A new novel had been sent her that morning. She had looked it over, and it promised to be interesting. She did not relish the idea of giving it up to do any favor for Dr. Davidge, and she knew intuitively that he wanted some service from her for the Lawton family.

Apparently he did not notice her hesitation, and he did not wait for an answer.

"Please be ready to go with me as soon as you can," he said. "Lawton is worse this morning,—harder to take care of, I mean. His wife is quite distracted, poor thing! and no wonder. Nobody in Duxberry has more leisure than you, Miss Haliburton, and you can hold the baby for her, at least, while she attends to Tom."

Winnie looked at her pleadingly as she left the room to make the necessary preparations.

"The Lord loveth a *cheerful* giver," Dr. Davidge quoted, with a little grimace and a smile at Winnie. "Your cousin does n't feel particularly grateful to me for my interference, or particularly anxious to tend anybody's babies. I hope you forgive me, Miss Winnie?"

"Oh, I'm so glad you asked her, Dr. Davidge. Agnes has very little idea of the comfort to be found in just such things. If she could only get interested in somebody outside of herself, I think she would be so much happier. Don't you think I can go so as far as Tom Lawton's by next week or week after, doctor?"

"I should n't be surprised. You're getting on wonderfully, I know."

"Aunt Angeline is sure she must leave us by the end of this month. I want to be ready to take her place by that time."

"We'll see, we'll see," the doctor said shortly, and rose as Agnes entered the room. The old, stern look had come back to his face again.

Agnes did not speak as the doctor handed her into the buggy, nor until they came in sight of the Lawtons' house.

"Is there anything else I can do for Mrs. Lawton?" she asked.

"No doubt, if you choose to do it. You can judge for yourself when you get there. I will call for you between four and five this afternoon."

Agnes gave a gasp. It was hardly ten o'clock. What a disagreeable man Dr. Davidge was in every way!

But Winnie had not exaggerated in her description of Mrs. Lawton. Agnes could hardly believe her eyes, or her ears either, for that matter; for, unless they deceived her, the lady had the sweetest voice she had ever heard in her life.

That Miss Haliburton was very handsome, very stylish, and very proud,—“stuck up,” the villagers called it,—Mrs. Lawton had heard in a general way, which made no particular impression. The fact that she was Winnie Maynard’s cousin attracted her to the young girl at once. Agnes, in her turn, had not been in the house five minutes before she understood Winnie’s admiration for Mrs. Lawton. She was surprised to see how pretty she was, and how refined and ladylike in the midst of her coarse surroundings. Agnes had looked for something quite different.

The baby might have been an angel, born in Paradise, so far as its appearance was concerned. Even its clothes were unobjectionable. Winnie at odd times had made every one of the little garments, else they might not have been so fine and dainty. There was very little purple and fine linen in Mrs. Lawton’s life.

At noon Miss Bascom arrived, bringing an enormous basket, full of good things.

“I told Winnie ’t would be too bad for you to feel that you’d got to get up a dinner because

Agnes was staying with you, and I guessed you were too tired to cook much, any way. I felt just like it this forenoon, and Nathan was going to mill, so he could bring me along just as well as not."

Miss Bascom stopped to take breath after this somewhat confusing sentence.

"What do you think of the baby, Agnes?" she asked abruptly.

"Think of him! That he's the sweetest little creature I ever got hold of," and she held him still closer, kissing him over and over again. It was one of the angelic charms of the infant that he was afraid of nobody, and he had been drawn towards Agnes from the first of his acquaintance with her. She looked radiant as she bent over the little one.

"Are you going home with me, Agnes? Your uncle Nathan will be back before long."

"Oh, no! Dr. Davidge is going to call for me this afternoon."

Miss Bascom looked unutterable things. Her face seldom wore so satisfied an expression.

“ Well, I’ve got a good many odd chores to do to-day,” she said, rising. “ You know I’m going back to Ellen’s before long, and there’s lots of things to see to. If Bob Griddle could only be sewed up in a suit of hop-sack, and kept in it for the next six months, there’d be less work for somebody to do.”

She was ready and waiting for Mr. Maynard by the time his wagon drove up to the door—again. The baby had fallen asleep. Tom Law—ton had at last gone off in the same direction — Nannie and one of her little brothers—Agnes—could not remember the names of the children—, there were so many of them—were amusing themselves with some paper dolls she had cut for them from brown wrapping-paper. Another girl, somewhat older than Nannie, was placidly arraying herself in Agnes’s hat and shawl, without remonstrance on the part of the owner. The tired mother sat down at last, the first time that day, Agnes noticed, since she had entered the house.

It was natural, and gratifying to both, that the conversation they could hold in the short

domestic lull should find its subjects in Winnie Maynard and Sharley Kenyon. Agnes was glad to hear what Mrs. Lawton gladly told her of all that the young girls had done for her and her family.

"I have very little fear for my husband now-a-days, thanks to them. If my boys grow to be good men, if my girls have any chance for themselves, it will be their work, all of it, and they know that I appreciate it."

There was no need for her to say so. Agnes looked at the delicate face, with its blue-veined temples, the sensitive mouth, and speculated a little as to what Mrs. Lawton's life had been before her marriage. There was a curious pang at her heart as she watched her; she could not easily have defined it. She was actually sorry when Dr. Davidge's buggy appeared at the door.

The gentleman might have been somewhat curious as to what the day had been to Agnes, but he gave no indication of the fact. She, on her part, volunteered no information. The afternoon ride was as silent as that of the forenoon had been. But Miss Bascom had some decided

opinions of her own, which she freely expressed to Winnie.

“Tom Lawton’s is n’t Saratoga, not exactly, and Mrs. Lawton is n’t Bell Duncan, but she’s Mrs. Lawton, and that’s considerable. There’s high-ways and by-ways and hedges and ditches in this world as well as cushioned rocking-chairs and hotel piazzas. I should n’t a bit wonder if that girl some time—”

But through the partly open door Miss Bascom caught sight of Bob Gridley and Kump. She never finished the sentence. Winnie completed it for herself, and most satisfactorily.

CHAPTER XII.

THE train ran shrieking into the Duxberry Depot. Its arrival was the great event of the day, for it brought the mail, not a very extensive one at any time, but sufficient to create considerable interest in the village. The post-office was only a few steps from the station. Generally both places were liberally filled with loafers; idle men who tried to appear as if looking for something to do, and half-grown boys who made no such pretence. Jack Godfrey strolled down from the store occasionally when trade was dull, as it usually was nowadays, and the farmers driving through the village in their heavy wagons generally delayed their trips a little if they found themselves in the vicinity of the railroad track.

The usual group was assembled when, one day, in addition to the mail-bags and freight thrown out upon the platform, a young man stepped

from the cars, and stood still for a minute or two, looking about him. A "city fellow," unmistakably. The fact was as evident as if written over him from the crown of his soft felt hat to the soles of his patent-leather boots. He was in no way embarrassed by the curious eyes which rested on him ; conscious, rather, of a certain superiority which made such scrutiny quite satisfactory and agreeable.

" My ! But ain't he a swell, though ! "

It was Fixy Dullwedge who made the remark. Fixy was not above playing truant — " hooking Jack," he termed it, when the fishing or nutting was particularly good. This time he was *en route* for a new woodchuck's hole he had heard about the day before.

Lon Morse, extricating a mowing-machine from the pile of freight just deposited, stood only a few feet off. The stranger approached him.

" Are there any teams to hire here in Duxberry ? "

Lon Morse straightened himself, raising his hat courteously. He looked like a giant confronting a pigmy.

"There's a livery-stable farther up the street. Generally you can find one there."

The gentleman seemed undecided. "Up the street" was not very explicit, particularly as he could see nothing which looked like a street in any direction. Besides it was remarkably muddy, and mud was his especial abhorrence.

"How far is it to Mr. Elnathan Maynard's?" was his next question.

"A little more than a mile."

Lon Morse hesitated an instant, then spoke again.

"I'm going that way myself in ten or fifteen minutes. I can take you along in my wagon if you're willing to ride in that way. Or, better still," he added on a second thought, "I'll take you up to the stable, if you'd like to get a team."

A team was certainly more desirable than the wagon, which looked like anything but a comfortable conveyance; yet—

"I'll go with you, if you don't mind," the stranger said. "Speak to me when you're ready, and be as quick as you can, please."

Lon Morse looked at him with a queer expres-

sion as he turned around and sauntered into the waiting-room, lighting a cigar as he went. The loafers gradually dispersed, not, however, until they had learned the stranger's destination— informed by Fixy, who had listened with interest to the question addressed to Lon Morse— and made various random guesses as to his object in visiting Duxberry.

Lon arranged a seat as comfortably as possible for his passenger, to whom, according to orders, he spoke when the wagon was ready. If before the end of the trip he suspected the stranger's reason for preferring that conveyance he gave no hint of the fact. But the gentleman's numerous questions would have aroused the suspicions of a duller fellow than Lon Morse.

"And Miss Haliburton is considered very handsome, you say?"

Lon Morse made no reply. Perhaps he compressed his lips slightly. He was getting a little tired of this kind of catechism.

"This is Mr. Maynard's," he said, an instant later, as he drove the wagon up to the door.

Bob Gridley was on his way home from school—with protruding eyes fixed upon the gentleman.

“Here, Bob,” Lon called out, “run in and tell Miss Haliburton that —”

“Miss Harry Burton ain’t in. She’s been to school. She’s coming along,” and Bob pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in his usual fashion to two figures crossing the field.

“Why—Arthur!” Agnes exclaimed, with the greatest surprise and pleasure, as she came near enough to recognize him. Her face flushed as she gave him both hands, and her eyes fell under his steady gaze. In an instant she recovered herself sufficiently to introduce Sharley Kenyon. She seemed to take for granted that Lon Morse was already acquainted with Arthur Cosgrove; at any rate she did not introduce them.

“Much obliged,” Mr. Cosgrove said a little shortly to him, at the same time handing him a piece of money, “this will make it all right, I suppose?”

Lon Morse drew back with surprise.

"It is all right as it is, sir," he said with a certain dignity. "Will you go home with me, Sharley?"

He lifted her into the seat Arthur Cosgrove had occupied, and the two drove away together. The two left behind seemed hardly conscious of their departure.

"I had no idea that Agnes—" Sharley began slowly, then stopped altogether.

"The new mower has come, Sharley. It's here in the wagon. See?"

"Sure enough! I had n't noticed it. So that was the way you happened to—"

There she stopped again. Probably Lon was thinking of the mowing-machine. At any rate, they both seemed to be thinking of something which made their conversation a little forced, and consequently unnatural.

"She—Miss Haliburton, has been to the school again?" he asked after a little pause.

"Yes, and she's seemed to enjoy her second visit better than the first one. I'm so glad. I can't flatter myself that she'd come if she could find anything more interesting, though. Yes.

terday she got me to go with her, and return some calls. We went to Mrs. Hallock's, Mrs. Hall's, and Mrs. Bond's. Think of that!"

"And not Mrs. Slocum's?" Lon laughed.

"Not Mrs. Slocum's. Nothing would induce Agnes to go to Mrs. Slocum's, though we knew Amanda had gone visiting. Oh, Lon, Winnie has been spending the day at Mrs. Lawton's! I forgot to tell you."

"Well, really, that is quite an achievement for Winnie. By the way, Sharley, I saw Fixy Dullwedge hanging around the depot to-day. Why was n't he in school?"

"What a conundrum, Lon! But you may be sure I missed him. So did Agnes. There's the doctor's buggy now. He's been for Winnie, I suppose."

"Dr. Davidge is very fond of Winnie. I imagine she's the only person in the world that he is fond of. He—do you know, Sharley, what he thinks of Miss Haliburton?"

"I don't think he quite approves of Agnes, somehow, and she considers him too disagreeable for endurance."

"Why, what has he against her?"

"It might puzzle him to answer that question. Nothing in particular, I'm quite sure. Only he said to me one day—one day when Agnes was dressed finer than usual and was gayer, too, than she generally is, 'It's such women as that who ruin the world for us,' and I must say his face looked almost demoniac. What do you suppose he meant, Lon? I've wondered about it a hundred times."

"It's hard to tell what that man means by a good many things," Lon answered a little gruffly. "Jack is quite excited, Sharley, over a talk he's had with—about Mr. Haliburton's getting him business in the city."

"Yes, he told me about it."

"And you did n't encourage it," Lon observed, correctly interpreting the peculiar tone in Sharley's voice. "Well, I don't wonder at that."

The talk between them flagged again, and they reached home in an absorbed silence.

CHAPTER XIII.

DR. DAVIDGE was driving slowly, possibly for the reason that it would tire Winnie less ; possibly for the sake of prolonging their interview.

"Have you heard anything definite about uncle John's business troubles?" Winnie was asking with some anxiety. "You speak as though you had."

"He has had some transactions with a friend of mine in the city who has lately begun to grow uneasy, having lost heavily, and who has evidently lost confidence as well as money, judging from his enquiries."

"And that's a great deal worse than the other," Winnie exclaimed impulsively.

Dr. Davidge smiled slightly.

"Of course you would think so," he said.

"Don't you?" she asked.

He did not immediately answer.

"As I have no confidence to lose, the financial

loss would certainly seem to me the greater,—if you can compare two things, one of which does n't exist."

"But you are not speaking of my uncle John now."

"No. Personally, I know nothing of him, except that he is a remarkably fine-looking man."

"And he is such a generous, kind-hearted one, too. I've felt sorry about his being troubled and perplexed so seriously in his business, but I—it would be hard for me to believe, Dr. Davidge, that he intended to wrong anybody. Nobody who is acquainted with him believes that."

"Well, that certainly is in his favor, so far. It's a good thing to be honest in intention, whatever the result may be. You can't say that of all the mischief-makers in the world, financial or otherwise."

"I hope, with all my heart, that Agnes will never hear any of the disagreeable things that are said about her father."

"Why, what can any one say if—"

"Oh, I said those who were acquainted with him. Even they are very hard in their criticisms sometimes. They blame him for taking such risks,—risking other people's money,—and not seeming to care much, though that is only because he is so sure he can pay it all back. Those who don't know him,—only know about him,—I'm afraid they all think that he's a swindler."

"We judge by appearances in this world,—more's the pity. I suppose the whole trouble with your uncle is that he is too hopeful, which, in some cases, is quite as bad as to be hopeless. Not so uncomfortable, of course, to the individual, but working a good deal more misery for his friends—especially if he borrows their money on the strength of it."

"Now, Dr. Davidge, you're thinking of yourself as being so different from my uncle."

"Well?"

"Are you—hopeless?"

Winnie asked the question as if she might be taking too great a liberty, and regretted the words as soon as they were spoken.

"And if I were?" he responded readily enough. "That is not the worst condition possible. 'Those who have nothing left to hope, have nothing left to fear.' I'll venture to say that you are not familiar with that quotation, Miss Winnie. It has not the spirit of your pet poems, yet I find comfort in it."

"I think I should rather fear a little, than to hope for nothing."

"'If past bloom, past fading also,'" the doctor quoted. "The same thought in different words, and certainly proving your favorite notion that there is compensation in all things."

"And there is really nothing in the world that you enjoy, Dr. Davidge?"

"So little, Miss Winnie, that if I should define its exact limits you would not believe me."

"You certainly find pleasure in books," Winnie suggested.

"I did—once. I read now, occasionally, when I get angrier than usual, or can't sleep, or for any other reason want to forget my own existence. I have some favorite topics ready at

hand to take up on such occasions. Perhaps you'd be interested to know what they are?"

"I certainly should."

"Compound fractures, yellow fever, blood-poisoning, and cancers. I revel in cancers."

Winnie laughed outright at his peculiar tone.

"You are very fond of poetry. You told me so once."

"I was fond of it. Poetry was one of my passions. But to read poetry and live prose—such prose, too!" He shook his head slowly. "I came across something the other day which seemed a sort of compromise, though. It was the prosiest sort of life put into poetry, one of Bayard Taylor's,—‘John Reed's Thoughts.’ They were not very different from that of many men," and he recited with exquisite expression the long poem to which he had referred. Winnie listened breathlessly, and tears came into her eyes from the pathos both in voice and words. "Most of us know by experience," he went on,—

"‘The hankering after a life that you never have learned to know,

The discontent with a life that is always thus and so,
The wondering what we are and where we are
going to go.’”

He glanced at Winnie as he spoke, rebuked by the sadness of her face.

“I’ve taken unfair advantage of your willingness to listen to me,” he said hastily. “This is a better stanza :—

“‘There’s nothing to do but take the days as they
come and go,
And now to worry with thoughts that nobody
likes to show ;
For people so seldom talk of the things they want
to know.’”

“I don’t think it’s much improvement upon the other,” Winnie said. “There are more profitable thoughts than those which keep us ‘wondering what we are, and where we are going to go.’ What we are, we cannot help, so far as our existence is concerned, and we need n’t be anxious about the afterwards if we try to do what is right here and now.”

“But you have such sublime faith,” he replied. “Sometimes I find some comfort in this,—

“ ‘There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.’

Tennyson said that.”

“ And I can give you something better yet,”
Winnie replied warmly ; “ one of my pet poems,
as you call them. It is not based on any creed,
it doesn ’t interfere with any, but I should be
sorry for any human soul who could not accept
it and believe it.”

“ Let me have it by all means. Perhaps *I*
can believe it ! ”

Winnie repeated the lines very slowly :—

“ In the bitter waves of woe,
Beaten and tossed about
By the sullen winds that blow
From the desolate shores of doubt.

When the anchors that faith hath cast
Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
To the things that cannot fail.

I know that right is right ;
That it is not good to lie ;
That love is better than spite,
And a neighbor than a spy ;

That the rulers must obey ;
That the givers shall increase ;
That Duty lights the way
For the beautiful feet of Peace ;

In the darkest night of the year,
When the stars have all gone out,
That courage is better than fear ;
That faith is truer than doubt.

And fierce though the fiends may fight,
And long though the angels hide,
I know that Truth and Right
Have the universe on their side."

"Is that the whole of it?" Dr. Davidge asked,
as if he could have listened indefinitely.

Winnie smiled.

"Not quite. I've given you only that part
of it which I knew you could n't contradict or
quarrel with."

"And the rest? I must have the rest of it,"
he pleaded.

"Not now. You would n't accept it. You
would think the whole poem spoiled by the
addition. You like what I have given you?"

"Yes. I could n't quarrel with it if I wanted
to. But I wish I were more anxious to do my

duty and surer of finding the peace that I suppose does follow it when it's done cheerfully. Theoretically, too, I know that 'truth is mighty and will prevail,' but its everlasting postponement is very depressing."

They came in sight of the house as the doctor finished speaking. Winnie did not reply.

"When will you give me the rest of the poem?" he resumed, "or tell me where I can find it for myself?"

"When—when I think you can believe it as I do, if that time comes."

"And if it never comes?"

"But it will! I have more faith than ever that it will. Just now I feel sure of it."

"That is strange! And why?"

"Because you want it and long for it so much. Because nothing else satisfies you, or ever can. Because, oh, Dr. Davidge, because it is true!"

The doctor drove home slowly, as was his wont after one of these talks with Winnie Maynard. He threw the reins to the servant, who met him at the gateway, and who looked as though he would have spoken had he not been

checked by the expression on the doctor's face.

Inside the office a lady was waiting, standing very still, with a certain intensity in face and figure. The doctor strode straight forward with an absent-minded look, noticing nothing.

"Myron!"

The lady took a step forward and stretched out her hands to him. He turned quickly and caught her in his arms.

"Oh, Sue! Sue!"

It was all he said, but there seemed no need of words between them.

Duxberry had for a long time held many theories concerning Dr. Davidge and his domestic affairs. Gradually one had been adopted as the most reasonable, as well as the most sensational. Mrs. Davidge was in an insane asylum, where her husband visited her regularly. There was some hope of her ultimate recovery. This was the belief into which Duxberry had settled by degrees, after discussing the probabilities of her having run away from her husband, gone on to the stage, lying with an incurable



dy took a step forward. Dr. Davidge turned quickly and caught her in
his arms. "Oh, Sue! Sue!" he said.—Page 174.

Duxberry Dotings.

sease in a city hospital, and travelling abroad
her health. The notion that she had com-
mitted suicide was at one time advanced by an
dependent thinker and readily adopted by a
w others, but after a while it fell into dis-
vor.

The arrival of the lady who had awaited the
ctor in his office, was known throughout the
eater part of the town before he reached home,
d was discussed with the greatest animation.
ttle Mary Maynard, sitting with one of her
aymates on the doorstep of a neighboring
use, listened with interest to a conversation
ing on inside.

"She has come back completely cured, they
y, and there is n't a bit of danger in her living
home now. She had a dreadful fever, and
at caused the trouble in the first place. It
as a mistake about insanity running in the
mily. They never had any children, but they
ied to adopt one and he ran away. They say
rs. Davidge abused him terribly when she was
one of her bad spells. Some folks think it
as Bob Gridley, the doctor was so anxious for

Mr. Maynard to take him. Perhaps he'll go back there, now Mrs. Davidge is home again."

The child was full of all this news when she took her seat that night at the tea-table, and related it in a somewhat disjointed manner for the edification of the family.

"She had on a beautiful dress, and her gloves and hat and parasol were just the same color, only she had her veil down and nobody could n't see her face, and she's real tall and talks low and real sweet. I guess Dr. Davidge'll be glad, don't you, Winnie?"

Winnie smiled as she nodded her head at her little sister. She was able to come to the table occasionally, and had expressed a desire to end her unusually happy day by taking tea with the family. But she was very pale, and her breath came short.

"I think I'll go to my room after all, aun Angeline," she said with some effort. "I'm more tired than I thought I was."

But in less than twenty-four hours Mr. Davidge left town again. She had gone to her

father's on a visit, was the report. He was quite an old man and very sick, was not expected to live long and was worth an immense fortune. Mrs. Davidge was his only child, and was to have all the money. Of course there would be no need of the doctor's continuing his practice, and very likely he would leave Duxberry and go back to the city again.

Two days after, the doctor called again on Winnie Maynard, none the worse for the entire day she had spent in visiting the Lawtons, and feeling greatly encouraged by the rapid strides she seemed to be making towards her original health and strength. She talked about it with great enthusiasm.

"You are learning how to take care of yourself," the doctor said in a satisfied tone. "You are safe so long as you do not over-exert yourself, and I can trust now to your own good sense for that."

"But you could n't have trusted me day before yesterday," she acknowledged frankly. "I tried to take my supper at the table with the rest of the family, and found it was a foolish

thing to do. I did n't leave my room at all yesterday—by way of atonement."

The doctor picked up a cabinet photograph which lay upon the table, and gave a quick exclamation as he looked at it. He turned towards Winnie with surprised and inquiring eyes.

"A Miss Bell Duncan, my cousin Agnes's special friend. It was just sent to her. Handsome, is n't she? Agnes says the picture does n't do her justice, either."

"How old is she?" the doctor asked, renewing his examination of the photograph.

"Just nineteen. She is to be married in a few weeks and go to England to live. It is a great trial to Agnes that she could n't spend the summer with her at Saratoga."

"And the family? Have they—do they—do you know anything further of them?"

"Not much. There are several children in the family. They live in New York. Mrs. Duncan is a widow. She takes charge of Agnes somewhat, when she is out of school."

Dr. Davidge threw the picture aside, rising as he did so. There was some change in him

since Winnie had seen him last. It seemed to her that some great strain had been relaxed, some great load lifted. Yet he was as grave and stern as ever; and as he drove away, Winnie found that she was just then more curious than she had ever been as to his personal history.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARTHUR COSGROVE "put up," in Duxberry parlance, at the only hotel which the village possessed, "the Tate tavern," as the oldest inhabitants persistently called it, notwithstanding that it had acquired during the prosperous days of Duxberry, the more pretentious title of the Harbright Hotel. He had engaged a first-class "team" at the adjoining livery stable, with instructions that it should be reserved for his individual use ; and Duxberry, languishing for a new sensation, found one in the "doings" of the young man from the city.

"I had no idea, Agony"—it was one of his various pet names for Miss Haliburton—"that Duxberry was quite such a forsaken place. No wonder you've found it dull music. But it promises entertainment enough for me."

"In what way, I should like to know?"

Arthur Cosgrove stroked his blonde moustache, already the admiration and envy of more than one of the Duxberry boys, and looked amused, self-satisfied, and wise.

"'T is n't often one gets into such a refreshing set of greenhorns," he remarked. "I like to experiment with human nature, and a chance to work on the raw material is particularly inspiring. I shall find enough to do for the short time I stay, and enough to interest me, you may be sure."

"Well, you must enjoy the natives more than I've ever done," Agnes remarked, rather puzzled as to Arthur's exact meaning. "I suppose there will be an immense amount of talk about your coming here, Arthur."

"Oh, no doubt," he replied carelessly. "They seem hard up for subjects. It's a mercy to furnish them with a new one. You don't mind what they say, of course?" he added, noticing a grave expression on his companion's face.

Agnes did mind, and enough to make her very uncomfortable. It was useless, however, to enlarge on that topic.

"What sort of a specimen is that high and mighty Morse who brought me down here yesterday?"

"Oh, he's one of the finest fellows in Duxberry," Agnes answered, quoting the words of Jack Godfrey and Sharley Kenyon. Her respect for Lon Morse seemed to increase in exact proportion to the social distance at which he kept himself from her. It was only natural, too, that she should be influenced, though unconsciously, by the high estimate which everybody around her placed upon him.

Arthur Cosgrove looked at her a little curiously.

"It seems to me that you've developed a vast amount of admiration for that son of the soil," he said, with a little forced laugh. "Something sudden, Aggie, or of gradual growth?"

Agnes laughed in her turn, not noticing, apparently, the serious tone in the light words.

"Oh, gradual, very gradual, I assure you. So gradual, in fact, as to be almost imperceptible. I admire him—well, as one does Casabianca, you know. His reputation for all sorts of good

things is equal—here in Duxberry—to that of the boy of the burning deck history.”

“There was a fellow at the depot they called Jack—a pretty good-looking, rather—”

“Oh, yes, Jack Godfrey. He’s a book-keeper in the largest store in town, and much more of a gentleman than most of the young men around here.”

“He looks so.”

“I’ve written to father about him. He’s anxious to get a better situation, and wants to live in the city anyway. I’ve no doubt there are plenty of good chances for him there.”

“Oh, no doubt,” Arthur replied with his customary bantering tone. “The city is yearning for just such young men. It is ready to offer them any inducement to leave their native hills and dales. You’ve developed an interest in him, too, have you? It must be an extensive one to lead you to hunt up business for him.”

Agnes looked up quickly.

“Nonsense!” she exclaimed. “I’m not doing anything of the kind. He’s engaged to Sharley Kenyon, and it’s just as much for her benefit as

for his. Jack Godfrey is well enough, but I imagine he'd grow rather tiresome after a while. There does n't seem to be much to him. I don't exactly see what Sharley—"

A flash of lightning, followed by a heavy crash of thunder, interrupted the sentence. They had been riding for some time, were several miles from home, and realized with sudden dismay that the storm which had been so long in coming as to destroy their fear that it would come at all, was at last upon them. Great drops were falling. Agnes looked distressed ; Arthur, angry.

"Bother the rain!" he exclaimed petulantly, wrenching up the top of the buggy. "There's always some confounded nuisance to—got any extra wraps, Aggie?"

But she had taken nothing, not even a shawl, though her cousin had brought her one and tried to force it upon her just before she started. "Such a dear little old woman, as you are, Winnie!" she had said derisively, and thrown the shawl aside. She thought of it now with longing. Her dress, a light summer silk, would

be ruined—every drop of water spotted it, she remembered ruefully—and she had no one to blame but herself. It was growing chilly too, and she shivered.

Arthur turned the horse around in the direction of the village. Just ahead of them was a large carriage, exceedingly rusty and old-fashioned, but looking most comfortable as a shelter from the rain. Arthur instantly recognized the driver, who was alone.

“Here, I say, McFarland, where are you going in this deluge?”

“Over to Putney, for the minister,” the man answered, halting as he spoke, and looking with great interest from one to the other.

“For the minister!” Arthur repeated with a laugh. “For an umbrella, most likely. There’d be more sense in it. What did you take this road for?”

“This—road?” the man repeated with a bewildered air.

“Did n’t you say you were going to Putney?”

“Putney—yes.”

“Then you ought to have turned to the—I’m

going to Putney. We 'll ride with you, with your permission, to keep from getting drenched. Here, you sit still. I 'll manage it."

During this brief conversation, Arthur Cosgrove had alighted from his own conveyance, seized McFarland's horse by the head and turned him in the direction of Duxberry. He lifted Agnes from the buggy and placed her in the ancient carriage before she fully realized what he was about. His own horse he hitched to the back of the carriage, then jumped in and took his seat by McFarland.

"Now this is more cosy," he said with an air of satisfaction. "This robe is just what we wanted," and he wrapped it carefully around Agnes, apparently unconscious of the fact that he was thereby depriving McFarland of his natural right and title to the article. "Putney's quite a place," he continued, as if familiar with every inch of its territory. "What part of the town are you going to, my friend?"

Mr. McFarland, never averse to social intercourse, was perfectly willing to describe Putney, its inhabitants in general, his own acquaintances,

n particular, and all facts concerning the present condition of the town, its past history and future prospects. In the course of the conversation he also managed to impart considerable information concerning his own affairs. Arthur Cosgrove, growing tired after a time of McFarland's solo, took the talk into his own charge and managed in half a dozen sentences to convince him that they were old acquaintances.

"Of course you remember when I used to take your sister Sue to dances in old Hyler's barn?" he asked, nudging Agnes with his elbow as he spoke. He had taken the reins himself and relieved McFarland of all responsibility.

"Well, for sure!"

"And went fishing with your brother Ben in Cat's Creek. Don't you remember?"

"Well, for sure!"

"I thought you'd do me a favor for old acquaintance sake, though I felt pretty well cut up at first to think you'd forgotten me. You see 't is n't pleasant to take a young lady to ride

and half drown her. I knew exactly how you 'd feel under the same circumstances, so I took the liberty to—"

"This ain't Putney!"

They had at that moment driven up to the door of the old Tate tavern. McFarland straightened himself and gazed around at his familiar surroundings.

"Putney! No, not by a good deal! Did you understand me to say I was going to Putney? I said I wanted to get to Duxberry for the sake of the young lady, you know—and then I'd see you safe on your way to Putney. You got things mixed a little, my friend, that's all. No harm done."

He lifted Agnes from the carriage and led the way into the hotel parlor. The rain was pouring in torrents, the thunder and lightning was incessant. Agnes still shivered occasionally from chilliness and excitement. She had laughed at Arthur's conversation with their companion, but she was uneasy and troubled through it all. A group of men stood in the hall-way—some of those who were accustomed

to loaf about the railroad station. They looked curiously at Agnes as she passed them, while a shrill, angry voice reached them through the storm from the outside of the house.

"I tell you I've got to go to Putney, and the young lady—"

Agnes was thankful that she did not hear the rest of it. She was thoroughly uncomfortable. She heard a quick, harsh laugh from one of the men as she closed the parlor door behind her.

In a few minutes a waiter appeared with glasses on a little tray, Arthur Cosgrove following him.

"Whiskey. It will keep you from taking cold, Agnes. It's poor stuff, but the best to be got here."

He talked rapidly as he prepared the drink for her with a quick, professional air.

"What have you done with that man, Arthur?" she asked anxiously.

"The man! Oh, he's all right. I told the fellows to mix him a pretty stiff glass and see that his horse and Noah's ark were headed for

the historic Putney. He'll get there before midnight if he follows his nose. The boys think it's a first-rate joke."

At first it had seemed very funny to Agnes herself, but she had reached a place where she wondered that she could have thought so.

"I think it's a shame, Arthur," she said hotly. "I'd rather have been wet through than—"

"Oh, nonsense! There's nothing to make a fuss about. You didn't object when I first turned the horse round. That was the time to protest. You ought to drink that whiskey while it's hot, Agony."

He had disposed of his own glass in speedy fashion and was preparing another.

"But I didn't know at first who the man was," Agnes pursued. "That poor, half-witted McFarland fellow! Why, he'd believe he was on his way to Africa if you told him so."

"A most convenient fellow to meet in an emergency," Arthur responded. "Not likely to waste time in argument."

"But are you sure that he will get there all

right? Do you think he can find his way? It's a fearful dark night."

"Oh, the horse can if he can't. Don't worry. They're harnessing up for me now. I'll take you down to your uncle's right away. I thought we'd better come here first, because—" he pointed significantly to the empty glasses on the tray.


Agnes was left alone again for a few minutes. She stood by one of the windows looking out upon the wild night, which had suddenly darkened down upon them, though it was only a little past sunset. The rain showed no signs of abating, though the thunder and lightning were gradually growing fainter. She felt relieved at Arthur's re-appearance, and still more so at his thoughtfulness in having the horse brought around to the back door. The loafers, still hanging around the bar in the front of the house, were thereby doomed to disappointment.

"But he's a smart one, that city chap," commented one of the patriarchs of the party, a statement which no one present seemed inclined to contradict.

CHAPTER XV.

DUXBERRY was in a commotion the next morning, as was naturally to be expected. In at least a dozen different directions had gone the same number of different versions of a sensational story, the adventures of Alick McFarland, the minister's hired man, on his way to Putney.

It was fortunate—for Duxberry—that the rain had driven so many of the witnesses indoors, thus giving them opportunity for seeing Agnes as she passed through the hall on her way to the parlor, and understanding in its minutest details the order given by her escort for hot whiskey. McFarland had lived for years in the family of Dr. Holbrook, the eldest minister in town, and the only one who had remained faithful to Duxberry through its failing fortunes. No man among them inspired greater or more universal respect, and this feeling restrained in



arge measure the ridicule to which Alick McFarland, by his oddities and queer sayings, constantly exposed himself. When a lad he had received a severe blow on the head, and though bright enough before the accident, had never since been of sound mind.

But he was the soul of fidelity, and fully equal to all the duties which devolved upon him in Dr. Holbrook's service. Of course he was more or less of a laughing-stock to certain of the villagers, but he always seemed to enjoy their jokes quite as much as they did themselves—a fact which they readily quoted when in need of justification. But never in the history of Duxberry had even the most reckless of its inhabitants ventured upon any liberty with McFarland to which the venerable Dr. Holbrook could possibly object.

Arthur Cosgrove had seen him at the livery stable. He had heard the jocose remarks bandied from one to the other, and been informed, in explanation thereof, that "McFarland was a half-wit and did n't even know enough to get mad." An opportunity for him to avail him-

self of the information came sooner than could have been anticipated, and while not one of the idlers about the hotel would have dared to do what Arthur Cosgrove had done, there was not one among them who did not laugh over it with hearty appreciation. To the credit of Duxberry it should be added that not one of those to whom the story was repeated saw anything to laugh at, and the "women-folks" were loud in their denunciations of Arthur Cosgrove's conduct. These were liberal enough to include Agnes Haliburton also, who was regarded by the majority as an "aider and abettor," though no one considered her "the head and front of the offending."

But a still greater sensation was in store for them. That morning before breakfast, Mrs. Holbrook, with a shawl thrown hastily over her head, ran across the road to her nearest neighbors—the Slocum sisters—with most exciting news.

"Oh, Jane—Amanda!" she gasped, "I've stood it alone just as long as I possibly can! Something must have happened to the doctor.

Alick started for him yesterday afternoon and has n't got back yet. I sat up all night, expecting them every minute, and what shall I do?"

Mrs. Holbrook had grown quite desperate with nervousness and anxiety. Nothing less than desperation would have sent her to the Slocums' with any matter which she was not willing to publish from the house-tops, and she was never "neighborly" with them in their sense of the word. In fact she disliked them quite as much as it was in her gentle nature to dislike anybody, but just then there was no one else within reach.

"Where'd the doctor gone to?" Mrs. Amanda asked as soon as she had recovered from her first surprise. "I did n't know but what he was to home."

"They came over from Putney for him early yesterday forenoon—he was to preach 'a funeral sermon—and Alick was to go for him towards night. This morning he was to take him over to Rydersville, to another funeral. They were to start right after breakfast. Oh, where can they be?"

"They could n't possibly have got to Rydersville without comin' back through Duxberry," Mrs. Slocum remarked.

As no one at all familiar with the location of the towns mentioned could possibly have contradicted this statement, it met with the reception of a self-evident proposition, and passed without comment.

"It just rained pourin' all night," Mrs. Slocum added, not in a tone tending to tranquillize Mrs. Holbrook.

"I know that pretty well," the latter lady exclaimed with more exasperation in her voice than the Slocum sisters thought suitable for a minister's wife under any provocation, "but what ought I to do?"

"You can't go yourself to see what's become of him," Mrs. Slocum said oracularly, another self-evident proposition, considering that Mrs. Holbrook was afraid of horses, and had never attempted to drive one in her life. "We're a-makin' butter this mornin', but I s'pose—why, there's somebody a-comin' along now."

The three women looked down the road with

eager eyes. It was a strange buggy approaching, but the man who was driving—yes, it certainly was Dr. Holbrook. His wife rushed to the door to intercept him.

“Where’s Alick?” she called out, too breathless to say more.

Her husband asked her the same question at the same moment. They looked at each other as if petrified.

“Lon! Lon!” Mrs. Slocum shrieked at the top of her voice. She had just caught sight of Lon Morse driving in a light wagon around a turn in the road. He heard her and stopped at once.

“Jest think,” she explained to him with great volubility, as he drove up to the door. “Alick McFarland, he started yesterday afternoon to go to Putney to get the doctor—”

But the doctor, knowing her propensity for long stories, interrupted her with his own account of what had happened, telling Lon as briefly as possible what he would like to have him do.

“I must go to Rydersville, and as quickly as

possible," he concluded. "Such business can't wait and I'm depended upon."

Mrs. Holbrook returned home, though still in a very anxious state of mind. The Slocums renewed their butter-making with unusual vigor in the effort to finish the work as soon as possible, thereby giving time to make a few visits and "talk it all over."

Lon Morse could have told the doctor a good deal more than the doctor told him. He had that morning heard the whole story, or rather that part of it which was known by the select circle at the hotel. But that Alick McFarland had failed to reach his destination was a fact not yet known throughout the village. The young man set his teeth hard as he drove away from the Slocums' door. He was not a particularly patient fellow, with all his virtues, and did not enjoy the postponement of his own important business for the errand which was given him to do. His vexation was brief, however; forgotten in his greater indignation at the outrage to which Alick McFarland had been subjected.

But before the Slocums could dispose of all their domestic duties and make their first call—upon Mrs. Bond—Alick McFarland had been found, and the Bond family were in possession of such information as Annie, who chanced to be in Hall's store at the time of the arrival, could obtain from the exited bystanders.

“Lon Morse happened to remember that Dr. Holbrook bought the horse of old Ellis down on the Forge road, and perhaps he'd gone down that way, and there he was, sure enough. He was so tipsy when he started that he didn't know one road from another, and besides, it was awful dark and raining like everything, and he's broken his leg and they've got to kill him. Isn't that dreadful!”

“Who? Alick?” questioned Mrs. Slocum, with ideas completely mixed through the rapidly scattered pronouns. Her sister gave her a contemptuous glance in rebuke for the interruption, and Annie hurried on.

“That Cosgrove fellow gave him something to drink first, and then told the rest of them to

see that he was started on the right road. I s'pose he thinks that made everything all right. And Jack Godfrey says that the liquors were mixed on purpose, and that 's why he got drunk so easy. And it rained all night and he was just a sight—hardly knew anything when Lon found him. And Agnes Haliburton was laughing in the parlor with him and drinking whiskey, and some one heard her talking about that half witted McFarland fellow, as if she thought it was a good joke, and I s'pose she did."

Annie Bond stopped once more to take breath, Mrs. Amanda Slocum improving the opportunity to remark with much satisfaction,

"I would n't a bit wonder ef she put him up to it in the fust place, so now!"

"That Cosgrove fellow thinks he's pretty smart, I guess," Annie announced with the air of a person who intends to stimulate curiosity without gratifying it.

"Did you hear anything else about him?" her mother inquired, anticipating Mrs. Slocum.

"Yes, I heard enough about him," Annie

answered, with a mysterious movement of her head. "There's talk enough about both of them, for that matter, and I believe Jack Godfrey is jealous enough of him to kill him, if that would do any good."

"Jack Godfrey!" her mother ejaculated. "Why Jack Godfrey's en—"

"Oh, that don't make no sort o' difference," Mrs. Amanda interrupted, rapidly dabbing her lips with the handkerchief she had taken from her reticule. "We all know how she's been goin' on with him."

"And Jack has n't been a bit like himself since she came to Duxberry," Annie said in a tone of resentment. "I wonder if Sharley notices it. I don't see how she can help it."

"Notices it! Of course she does! She's got eyes in her head as well as other folks."

This remark came from the owner of the reticule.

"Well, that Haliburton girl will be the last one to hear what's said about them, I suppose," and Mrs. Bond appeared to take comfort in the reflection. "If Winifred Maynard was round

as she used to be, I guess some things would be different."

Mrs. Bond looked mysterious in her turn, and as if pondering upon her duty in the matter. If for once she succeeded in impressing upon the Slocums that she knew some interesting items of which they were ignorant—well, "it was a good thing," as she afterwards remarked to her daughters, "to let them think other folks knew something sometimes which they did not."

Annie Bond's report would have been discreditable enough to Arthur Cosgrove, even without the additions and variations which it had gained by repetition and hearsay. Allick McFarland had been very drunk, though one glass of whiskey was amply sufficient to make him so. Dr. Holbrook's horse had not broken his leg, though he had bruised it sufficiently to disable him, while the most of Lon Morse's forenoon was spent in caring for him and his unfortunate driver.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE county fair was the great annual sensation in Duxberry. For years it had been the chosen town for this exhibition. Lately its removal to a larger and more prosperous place had been much discussed, to the indignation of the Duxberry people. They had determined this year upon a finer display than usual, and great efforts had been made to secure that result.

"It's nothing less than a special providence, Aggie," Arthur Cosgrove remarked, "that I happen to be here at this particular time. Everybody is taking about the opening night. We must be sure to be on hand."

But Agnes did not readily assent to this proposition.

"Of course you want to go?" he asked, with some surprise.

"Yes," she said slowly. She felt with a sort

of intuition that everybody in Duxberry was by that time talking of something else as well as of the first night of the fair ; namely, Arthur Cosgrove and his doings.

“ I wish you would invite Winnie to go with us,” she said, in a lugubrious tone, and giving no reason for her request.

“ Oh, bother Winnie ! ” he exclaimed. “ No offence to your respected cousin, of course,” he added hastily, with a little laugh, “ but she does n’t strike me as exactly the person one would enjoy taking on a regular lark.”

“ I ’ve heard nothing about a ‘ regular lark,’ ” Agnes retorted, with severe emphasis. Evidently she was harder to please than usual.

“ Well, of course we expect to have a genuine good time—there will be novelty enough in the people and the things to amuse us—and your cousin might be sensitive about remarks we should doubtless be called upon to make—to each other.”

“ I shall not go unless she goes,” Agnes said, with decision.

“ ’Tis n’t worth quarrelling about, anyway,”

Arthur said, with an almost imperceptible touch of anger in his voice ; “ but, if I may be allowed to ask, why are you so anxious for her company on this particular occasion ? ”

“ Because I don’t fancy being quite so conspicuous, if you ’d really like to know. I’ve not forgotten that night at the hotel, or the way I was stared at when I went to ride with you the next day—and the next,” Agnes said rapidly.

“ Oh, ho ! ”

“ And if Winnie is with me it won’t be quite so bad. I don’t doubt there’s been talk enough about us in Duxberry,” she concluded.

“ The idea of your caring what anybody says ! ”

“ But I do care, for all that.”

For some reason Arthur Cosgrove seemed willing to relinquish the subject and turn to something more conducive to Agnes’ peace of mind—in which effort he was entirely successful.

But a new obstacle arose when she mentioned the matter to her cousin.

"Of course, I should like to go, Agnes, and you will please say to Mr. Cosgrove that I am greatly obliged to him for thinking of me, but you know it will be quite impossible."

"Impossible!" Agnes repeated.

"I never go out now in the evening."

"But you go often in the daytime, and you might as well try and see what you can do for just one night. I don't believe it would do you a bit of harm."

Winnie shook her head.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Agnes."

That the disappointment was a genuine one, was evident from Agnes' face.

"But I don't mean to be disappointed. You must go, and that's all there is about it. Arthur will be just as disappointed as I," she added, with some sacrifice of truth for the sake of strength in her argument.

It was the first opportunity which Winnie had had for doing anything towards her cousin's entertainment since she had been in Duxberry. Perhaps it was selfish in her to refuse this request, she thought. It was true that she went

out often in the daytime. Dr. Davidge was very kind about taking her to ride, and she had ventured on two or three very short walks with her father and the children. But mentally and physically she shrank from the idea of the trip proposed by Agnes, much as she would have enjoyed a visit to the fair. If she could only be sure that it would do her no harm—for just one night, as Agnes had suggested. Her aunt Angeline seemed fully determined upon departure, the needs of the Barker household growing daily more urgent, and Winnie felt that it was necessary for her to save all her strength for that emergency. But to sacrifice Agnes and her great desire, for the sake of saving herself for possible contingencies, seemed a selfish thing to do, no matter how she reasoned about it.

Agnes gained her point the next day by securing Winnie's consent, and was highly elated by her success. Yet Winnie's generosity had pleaded harder than any of Agnes' words—a fact she could hardly have understood even if Winnie had mentioned it, which was the last thing she was likely to do,

She was a little tired and somewhat flushed, even when they first reached the town-hall. She became at once the centre of an affectionate group, all of them surprised and pleased to see her among them in a public gathering once more.

"And you're looking splendidly, Winnie," Annie Bond exclaimed enthusiastically. "It will do you good to come, I'm sure."

Mrs. Bond, who stood near by, looked dubious—as Winnie felt. She better understood the fine color on Winnie's face.

Arthur Cosgrove was exceedingly lively and disposed to enjoy himself. He had already made friends with several of the Duxberry boys, who evidently looked up to him with much deference and admiration. Agnes insisted upon staying in a quiet corner with her cousin, to Arthur's disgust, but he appeared to forget his annoyance after a few minutes, and disappeared with three or four young men who seemed more eager for his company than for any other attraction.

Jack Godfrey was there with Sharley Kenyon, and, to vary a monotony which was becoming

rather tiresome, Agnes consented, while Sharley remained with Winnie, to go with him to another part of the room to examine a piece of pen-work, which appropriately framed and placed in a conspicuous position, attracted considerable attention.

"It is yours, I suppose?" Agnes inquired, a little indifferently. She had seen finer specimens hundreds of times, she thought to herself.

As she glanced up at the chirographical artist she found his eyes fixed upon her with a concentrated gaze from which she instinctively drew back. He turned his head aside, conscious of what she had seen, and proposed a stroll in another direction.

"I'll go back to my cousin, if you please," Agnes said shortly; "I'm tired."

"Nothing here, you think, worth looking at after the Centennial, and your New York exhibitions!"

In spite of himself Jack Godfrey's pique made itself manifest. Agnes did not reply.

"Well, of all the barefaced, outrageous doing—" and Mrs. Amanda Slocum adjusted her

spectacles for a squarer look. "And there's Sharley Kenyon moping by herself in the corner, and Winnie Maynard trying to smooth it over to her, I hain't no doubt. I wonder where that city fellow's gone to. I hain't seen him here to-night."

The observing Mrs. Slocum passed on, directing the attention of those who had not already noticed them, to "that finified Jack Godfrey and stuck-up Haliburton girl."

Agnes returned to her former place to find that Lon Morse and Sharley had taken Winnie a little way to see the model of a threshing-machine which the young fellow explained to them with great enthusiasm. She could watch from where she stood every gesture he made and every change upon his expressive face. Jack Godfrey remained close by her side, notwithstanding her unmistakable hint that his presence was not essential to her comfort. She was wondering, too, what had become of Arthur.

It was a long time since he had left them. She had promised Winnie that they would not stay late. More than that, she found nothing

interesting in the rural display, and was herself anxious to get away from it. Lon Morse brought the ladies back in a few minutes.

"Winnie is tired out, Miss Haliburton. If you have no objection I will take her home right away, and—"

Agnes drew herself up with added haughtiness. She resented the implication that she was forgetful of her cousin's comfort.

"I was only waiting your pleasure to release her," she said in reply. "I have been ready to go for some time. There is no occasion to trouble you, Mr. Morse."

Winnie did not hear the short conversation. With Agnes she was looking around in every direction to catch some sight of their escort.

Perhaps little Bob Gridley, temporarily detaching himself from the care of Mr. Maynard and the company of the Maynard children, divined their desire. At any rate he volunteered a statement to which there were a large number of interested auditors.

"That Cosgrove feller, Miss Harry Burton, he's a-playin' cards down stairs in a little room

with a lot of other fellers. Me and Fixy Dull wedge we peeped and seen 'em. They had lots of money on the table, too."

The gentleman whose whereabouts and occupation had been so plainly described, appeared at that moment, perhaps a little surprised at the battery of eyes brought to bear upon him, and the singular expression on more than one of the faces. His own face was very red. His manner was excited and grew more so as his glance fell upon Jack Godfrey.

"Arthur," Agnes said earnestly, stepping closely to him, "please take us home as quick as you can. Winnie can't stay any longer."

"And take you from your fascinating society?" he sneered with a scowl at Jack. Agnes bit her lip with vexation. For the last fifteen minutes she had been growing furiously angry with herself and everybody else. She felt that she had at last reached the limit of her endurance.

Perhaps Arthur Cosgrove received some intimation of that fact from a certain set look on her face. At any rate he went off at once

without further demonstration of any kind. Agnes was conscious of being glad that Lon Morse had not witnessed this little episode. He had gone back to show his model to some one interested in it. She never in her life had experienced a greater sense of relief than she felt when she and Winnie set out on their way home.

But the feeling was of short duration. Arthur's excitement had not in the least subsided, and in a few minutes she smelt liquor in his breath as he turned towards them with an uproarious laugh at one of his own jokes.

"Keep in the road, Arthur," she called out at that moment, seizing him by the arm. It was very dark. She could scarcely distinguish the horse, but she felt from the motion of the buggy that he was being recklessly driven. It was raining too, a little.

"Please let me take the reins."

It was Winnie Maynard's voice, and there was a compelling power in it which seemed to take effect upon Arthur Cosgrove. He ceased laugh-

ing, and made no resistance when she half rose to exchange seats with him.

“O Winnie, are n't you afraid?” Agnes called out tremulously. For herself she was thoroughly frightened. Winnie did not answer. She was trying to soothe the horse, who was—whether frightened or not—trembling quite as much as Agnes, and who had found it hard work to keep his feet on the pile of stones by the wayside into which he had been driven. She did not attempt to go on. It was all she could do to hold the horse in the road while she tried to quiet him, but in another moment they heard the sound of a horse's feet just behind them.

“Oh, mercy!” Agnes screamed, clutching Winnie's arm as she had Arthur's. But the sound gradually ceased as she spoke, and in an instant a man, carrying a dark lantern, stepped to the side of the buggy. It was Lon Morse.

“O Lon, I'm so glad!” Winnie said with a little catch in her voice, as she saw him. The reins dropped through her hands, and Lon took hold of the horse's head.

"Mr. Cosgrove, you will please help these ladies into my buggy as quick as you can. It is just behind, in the road."

But neither of them availed themselves of his assistance—such as it was. He made way for them to leave the buggy and did not attempt to get out of it himself.

Lon turned the horse around and put the reins into his hand.

"The horse will go straight to the stable," he said shortly, "if you let him alone," and he went without another word to the buggy where Winnie and Agnes were sitting.

Agnes was crying helplessly and Winnie had fainted on her cousin's shoulder.

"Can you drive, Miss Haliburton?" Lon Morse asked as he put his arm around the unconscious girl.

"I don't know how," Agnes answered, trying in vain to steady her voice, which was broken on the last words by another burst of tears.

There was no further word spoken, and Lon Morse, still holding Winnie, drove as fast as possible. There was a gruff exclamation from

Miss Bascom when he reached the house and carried Winnie into the sitting-room. Agnes followed silently.

"Of course," the grim lady said in her most *staccato* style. "Certainly. Why not?" and she applied restoratives while she emitted these ejaculations. Winnie opened her eyes with a dazed expression—a look in which there was no intelligence.

"She's out of the woods again," Miss Bascom said hastily to Lon who was watching her with great anxiety. "She'll have a chance to go to the fair once more if she wants to—I mean if her cousin Agnes wants it," but Agnes had disappeared, to Miss Bascom's evident chagrin.

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS BASCOM's hair was twisted into a smaller knob than usual, her lips set in a firmer compression, and her apron-strings tied in a harder knot—all of them indications of a troubled condition of mind.

Naturally she had less curiosity than belongs to most persons. "If I did n't have so much business of my own, I might find time to attend to other people's," she occasionally remarked, and sometimes replied to the too personal questions of the Slocums. "I've known people who grew rich minding their own affairs," was one of her axioms.

Nevertheless, she would have been less than human had she felt no curiosity concerning the circumstances of the girls' return from the fair, the night before. To the curiosity was added

an intense anxiety. It had been necessary for Lon Morse to go for Dr. Davidge, after finding,—as they did ten minutes after Winnie was brought into the house,—that her condition was an alarming one. The doctor had lost no time in coming. He looked very grave, and said nothing, except that he would come again early in the morning. He had just made his second call ; would come again about noon, he announced in leaving, and still had nothing to say.

Agnes Haliburton was equally silent. That she was mentally miserable was evident enough from her face. Miss Bascom, in spite of her desire and intention, had grown fond of Agnes, though it was a fact she was reluctant to acknowledge, even to herself. Every one of her faults she traced directly to her education and surroundings, things which, according to her reasoning, “the girl was no more responsible for than George Washington was for the Desert of Sahara.” She found in her an affectionate, trustful nature, a sweet disposition, and so much undeveloped capacity for various kinds of comfort,

so much ability for usefulness, that, as she declared, "it positively made her head swim to think of it." That Agnes and Winnie were not naturally so unlike as they appeared, was a theory she had gradually formed and stoutly maintained. But how to "civilize Agnes and make a decent sort of a woman of her," was a problem she had not yet solved. The appearance of Arthur Cosgrove only complicated the difficulty. "I guess she's twisting the rope for her own halter, fast enough," she had remarked to Mr. Maynard, "and if she's bound to hang herself she might as well get it around her neck first as last."

Miss Bascom, having found that her departure from the Maynard household was, for the present, impossible, set herself to work to make the best of it. It was her habit with all obstacles, trials, and disappointments. So far it had proved one of the principal employments of her life, and bade fair to continue such. The house had been thoroughly cleaned, the pantry abundantly supplied, and the clothing of the family put in complete order, in view of her leaving them;

and for the first time in months she had that morning, after clearing away the breakfast dishes, wondered what she could find to do. Even Bob Gridley was "all mended up for once," she thought with satisfaction, unconscious as yet of an enormous rent which he had made in the knee of his pants that morning on his way to school.

Lon Morse, coming into the kitchen in his usual familiar way, was surprised to see Miss Bascom sitting quite still and apparently absorbed in thought. It was a most novel position for her, and they smiled at each other as if in mute understanding of the fact.

"I saw the doctor this morning, Miss Angeline," the young man said, leaning against the opposite side of the table by which she was sitting. His face had grown grave again.

"I thought likely, by your not coming round earlier. Sit down, Lon, sit down. Did he say anything to you? I could n't get a word out of him."

"Not a great deal," Lon answered, throwing himself into a chair near by. "He says it's

hard to tell, just yet, how much this has thrown Winnie back. But he 's anxious enough about her, that 's easy to see. How does she seem to you, Miss Angeline?"

Miss Bascom shook her head ominously.

"A good deal as she did when she was first hurt—for three or four weeks after we found that she would probably live. She lies perfectly quiet, with her eyes closed, and there does n't seem to be anything to do for her but just wait. That 's harder for me than any amount of hard work. Agnes Haliburton has been sitting with her all the forenoon. I wonder what she 's been thinking about."

Lon Morse gave a sudden twist to the cap which he held in his hands.

"I feel very sorry for Miss Haliburton," he said earnestly. "Of course she was in no way to blame."

"I don't suppose any one's to blame for not having common sense. If you could buy it at the grocery store at so much a pound—and it was n't *too* expensive—why, you might expect people to invest occasionally and keep a little

stock on hand. It's handy to have; for once in a while you feel the need of it, or see that somebody else does. But it's an article you can't get in paper bags—more's the pity!"

Dr. Davidge drove up to the door at that moment, and passed through the kitchen on his way to Winnie's room.

"Any change yet?" he inquired abruptly.

Miss Bascom shook her head, and he closed the door behind him.

"There's another miserable individual," she said in a grim tone, "and perhaps *he* is n't to blame, either. I snppose, Lon," she added, after a pause in which he had drawn the obvious inference from her words, "that you're willing to tell me how this thing—whatever it was—came about?"

"The excitement was too much for Winnie," he answered. "She stayed too long—and Mr. Cosgrove is not very familiar with the road—it was a very dark night. She offered to drive, and, of course she had no strength for that sort of thing."

"I should think not! But Mr. Cosgrove did

not come home with them," she pursued, fully conscious that though, doubtless, Lon was telling her the truth, he was not telling the whole of it.

"There was no necessity. I overtook them before they had gone far, and offered to bring them myself—in fact, I insisted upon it."

"Humph! There he is now."

Another buggy drove up to the door, and the young man just mentioned swung himself out of it. Lon Morse rose hastily.

"Oh, sit down," Miss Bascom said sharply, with an impatient gesture and a frown on her face. "Agnes is at liberty now. She'll tend to him—and perhaps he'd just as lieve see her as me," she concluded, her face relaxing a little.

But Lon Morse had no more time to spare. In fact Miss Bascom had been surprised that he seemed able to spare so much. Idleness in the middle of the forenoon was a most unusual thing for either of them, and after his departure she went herself to Winnie's room.

Agnes Haliburton was not needed there, and

had no desire to stay after the doctor's arrival. She was at the parlor window when Arthur Cosgrove drove up to the door.

There was some constraint in their meeting. Agnes evidently had something ready to say, but her lips trembled and she did not speak as she shook hands with him.

"Last night's business was confoundedly rough on a fellow, Agony," Arthur said, with an attempt to appear at ease. "Of course I would not quarrel with such a fellow as that Alonzo Melissa Morse, before ladies, too; but I ought to have knocked him down,—there's no doubt about that."

"But, Arthur—" Agnes began at last.

"Oh, I suppose you imagined that I could n't drive straight because I let the horse have his head a minute while I was laughing over that joke on old Hall. The idea! I would n't have stood such a thing from anybody but you, Agony; and I must confess I was pretty mad for a minute when your pompous little cousin took the reins."

"Winnie was brought home in a dead faint,"

Agnes said hurriedly, finding both opportunity and self-control at the same moment, "and this morning—"

"Well, I don't wonder at that," Arthur interrupted. "She need n't have been so officious. I thought it generally agreed with a woman to have her own way," and he smiled as if mending matters more successfully than he had hoped. "I hardly think any one would hold me responsible when I was only trying to be decently civil all round."

Agnes was silent, though not wholly convinced. At the same time she was greatly relieved by Arthur's arguments on his own side. Everything began to look different to her, seen in the bright daylight, in the pleasant parlor, and from Arthur's point of view. To be sure, there was the card-playing and the liquor-drinking. He mentioned neither of those things, and as she recalled them at that moment they did not seem like such heinous offences, after all. It was only because this was Duxberry, and Duxberry people were so narrow-minded and conservative. They knew nothing of society and city ways.

They were easily shocked, and no doubt thought Arthur was fast and dissipated, and—well, they ought to see some of the young men who were at Saratoga last summer, if they had that idea!

“I’ve got more than enough of that fair,” Arthur went on. “Everything there is too slow for me, altogether. Can’t we take that trip to High Spur this afternoon? It’s a perfect day.”

“Why, Arthur, you don’t understand. Winnie is very sick indeed,” and the emphasis which Agnes laid upon the last word fully conveyed her meaning. “Mr. Morse had to go for the doctor right away last night. He’s been here twice this morning; he’s here now. Did n’t you see the buggy?”

“I did n’t notice. You don’t mean to say, Agnes, that it was your cousin’s going out last night that made her sick?”

“Of course it was, and it was awfully selfish in me to insist upon it as I did. I did n’t believe it could hurt her. And of course all that excitement coming home—I do think you might have been a little more careful under all the circumstances,” she concluded, forgetting

for an instant his magnanimity in refraining from quarrelling with Winnie and knocking down Lon Morse.

Arthur whistled, drummed on the window-ledge, and looked, as he felt, decidedly uncomfortable.

"So you mean that you've decided to punish me for it all by not going to ride with me?"

"Why, I can't go—I don't want to go with Winnie in such danger. Some one has to sit with her every minute. Miss Bascom has the whole family to see to."

"I don't exactly see how they managed to get along before you came to Duxberry, Agnes," Arthur said, half-smiling as he picked up his hat, though there was no smile in the tone of his voice. "I wish you would n't look quite so worried. I shan't go to High Spur till you can go with me if I wait a week, presuming I can retain my senses for that length of time in this town."

Agnes was not sorry to have him go. She was anxious to speak to the doctor, if possible, when he came from Winnie's room, and it was

with a sense of relief that she saw Arthur drive away.

Dr. Davidge was anxious, also, to speak to her, and came into the parlor as soon as Arthur left it.

"You will not consider it unreasonable in me, Miss Haliburton, if I demand from you a statement of what occurred last night to injure your cousin to this extent."

Agnes had fully intended to tell him, knowing that it was his right to be told, but the impulse was instantly driven back by the expression of his face and the tone of his voice. To "demand" a statement in that manner! She grew hard and defiant as she confronted him.

"I have no statement to make, Dr. Davidge."

"There has been some great strain—some shock to the nerves—something more than the mere effort of her going to the town-hall could account for. I asked Lon Morse about it this morning. He referred me to you."

"Probably he was not willing to tell you that he compelled us to get out of our own carriage into his. Winnie was tired to death when we

started for home, and she fainted just after she got into Mr. Morse's buggy—a very needless tax on her strength.”

“I can hardly believe that Lon Morse compelled you to do such a thing without some very good reason. What was it?”

“An absurd notion that my friend did not know—could n't see how to drive, because it was a dark night! You may call that a ‘very good reason.’ I don't.”

Dr. Davidge's scowl deepened. The look with which he regarded Agnes was not pleasant to see. She manifested her indifference to it by taking up a newspaper which lay on the table near at hand, and apparently becoming interested in it. The doctor turned and left the room. It is probable that he would have slammed the door behind him had it not been for disturbing Winnie.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AGNES HALIBURTON returned to her cousin's room in a most uncomfortable state of mind. Anger had been added to the regret, mortification, and distressing anxiety which of themselves seemed more than she could bear. Her face was deeply flushed, her breath came in little gasps. Miss Bascom was quick to notice these signs of her excitement.

"Had a quarrel with that city sprig of nobility, most likely, and a good thing—as long as it lasts," she thought, with satisfaction.

The medicines had been changed, and full directions for their use written out on a little card. Miss Bascom pointed to it silently, and, rising, left the room again. Agnes resumed her place by the side of Winnie. She had thought of many things while she sat there be-

fore, and now was thinking harder than ever. It was not fifteen minutes before her anger changed, as was inevitable, into the keenest remorse. She formed a definite resolution as she pondered upon her talk with Dr. Davidge, though even as she formed it she wondered how she could force herself to carry it out.

It was late in the afternoon before she made an effort in that direction. She had been sitting with Winnie all day; Miss Bascom, even when at leisure, manifesting no desire to relieve her from her post of duty. She went to that lady, who was busily sewing in the kitchen, Bob Gridley having in due time arrived and presented the rent in his knee.

"I want to go out a little while, aunt Angelina," she said humbly; "if you can sit with Winnie, I can get back before you want to set the table for supper."

Miss Bascom merely nodded, gathering up her work as she did so, in reply to Agnes's appeal. She had her own opinion of Agnes's design. "And she'll live to wish she'd been dead and buried before she was born, if she

makes it up again with that fellow. But I s'pose she's stood it as long as she can."

Agnes went as rapidly as possible to Dr. Davidge's house, and rang the door bell before allowing herself to stop and think what she was doing. Reflection meant flight, and she had "stood it as long as she could,"—the only part of Miss Bascom's conjecture which was correct. The sedate man-servant opened the door and showed her into the doctor's office.

The gentleman sat with his elbows on his desk, his head buried in his hands. Agnes stood perfectly still just inside the door. He had not even heard her enter.

"Dr. Davidge," she said softly.

He looked up with a start, then rose, taking a step forward.

"Winnie—is she—is Miss Maynard worse?" he asked sharply.

Agnes shook her head.

"I think she's a little better. I counted her pulse just before I came away. It was fifty—two."

Dr. Davidge smiled in spite of himself.

Added to the great relief which her words gave him, was considerable amusement at her professional investigation. He courteously placed a chair for her. She took it, but did not attempt to say anything further.

"And you came to tell me this? It was very kind of you, Miss Haliburton, knowing my great anxiety. But I was going to Mr. Maynard's in a few minutes myself."

"Yes, I supposed so," Agnes replied, then stopped again.

Dr. Davidge looked surprised, as she could easily discern.

"I—I wanted to see you here," she began once more. "I thought it might be easier for me to—I—you have no idea how ashamed I have felt ever since, for my conduct to you this morning, Dr. Davidge."

The fine face was more flushed than ever, and her lips trembled. If the doctor had been surprised before, he was now paralyzed with astonishment.

"Of course I ought to have told you what caused all this trouble," Agnes hurried on.

“Winnie was frightened—we were both frightened—when he—Mr. Cosgrove—started to drive us home. He was —” the words were coming quite as hard as she had anticipated—“he had been drinking, just a little, but enough to make him somewhat careless, and he did n’t notice that he was driving to the side of the road. It was very dark, you know.”

Agnes stopped to steady herself a little. She had not ventured to look again at the doctor.

“Winnie took the reins and tried to hold the horse still, and then Mr. Morse came up and told us to get out. I told you that this morning,” she concluded, with a little catch in her voice.

“Miss Haliburton!”

Agnes looked up quickly. There was a tone in his voice which she had never before heard, and he stood opposite to her with an equally new expression on his face.

“I thank you more than I can tell,” he said, “for this explanation—not so much because it has confirmed my suspicions of something of this kind, but because it has removed certain unpleasant suspicions of—you.”

"Of me!"

"I will be as frank as you have been," he went on. "I have judged you superficially, for I believed you utterly selfish, heartless, and—"

"O Dr. Davidge!"

"A harsh judgment, I know. My judgments are apt to be so. And after this morning—will you please tell me why you would not tell me this when I asked you before?"

"Because of the way in which you asked it," Agnes answered, almost at her ease again, and grateful for her mental relief. "Why, Dr. Davidge, I meant to tell you all the time. I was waiting to tell you when you came into the parlor and—and—"

"And what?"

"I felt as if you insulted me, looking at me as you did,—as if I'd murdered my cousin in cold blood,—and speaking as you did. It made me angry. Nothing would have made me tell you then."

"And if it were insulting then—you have waited for no apology from me, Miss Haliburton, before—"

Agnes smiled, fully understanding the disconnected sentence.

"Oh, of course I knew better just as soon as I thought it over. I was sure it was only your way."

"Only—my—way."

Dr. Davidge repeated the words slowly. He threw up his head and met the reflection of his face in a mirror upon the wall. He passed his hand over his eyes as he turned around.

"It is getting to be my only way, I am afraid," he said, with his old sombre expression. "No wonder, and I don't wonder either, that it repelled your confidence. I've never liked you, Miss Haliburton,—before. I ask your pardon in my turn."

"For not liking me?" Agnes asked with a little laugh.

"No, no! For misjudging you—for my rudeness sometimes. It has been nothing less than that."

"I'm glad you don't think quite so badly of me as you did at first. I'm selfish enough. I never knew how much so till I lived with my

cousin Winnie. But then she's different, anyway, from other girls."

The doctor was looking at Agnes with an absorbed expression.

"There is something I would like to say to you, Miss Haliburton, if I may do so without offence."

She showed her readiness to listen to what he had to say.

"You have a hundred-fold more power for good or for evil than your cousin Winnie ever possessed. It depends wholly on yourself, as of course you know, what you do with it. Young, lovely, attractive as you are—don't wince—it might be your grandfather talking to you for any living interest my life can hold—you can help or hurt every one around you as you please. You have had culture, society, travel, all such advantages. What use are you going to make of them for yourself or anybody else? For heaven's sake—for earth's sake—think sometimes of these things!"

He was more excited than she had ever seen him. He took a few steps about the room, then stopped again, somewhat quieter.

"I never preach," he resumed in a different tone, more like his usual stern and passionless one, "and I'm anything but a model for those who do. I have no religion and little philosophy. But I know something of life—and death, and I tell you that the death of the body is nothing to the living death of hope and happiness, and all precious things, which comes to some men through women as fair as you. This is what I wanted to say to you. Thank you for your generosity in allowing me the liberty."

Agnes rose as he finished speaking.

"It is for me to thank you," she said. "I must go now. Dr. Davidge, I am grateful to you for—for—everything."

"You will go with me," the doctor replied. "The buggy is at the door, and—"

"Oh, no! I would much rather go alone, please. And you think that Winnie—" she looked at him with an expression which plainly showed what assurance she was longing for.

"Probably this relapse is only temporary. We will hope so. But such extreme prostration is very alarming, as you doubtless know.

Winnie Maynard must be saved, not only from her own suffering, but for the sake of the good she was born to do in the world."

A minute later, and the doctor drove out of sight, without urging Agnes to accompany him. She was walking as rapidly as possible—their departure being observed by more than one pair of curious eyes—when Arthur Cosgrove overtook her.

"Why, Aggie, where have you been?" he inquired.

"On a little errand," she answered.

"I was just starting on one—a very disagreeable one for me. I wish I could hope it would prove equally so to you."

"Well, that strikes me as a remarkably generous wish, Arthur," and Agnes laughed.

"What is it?"

"My father has sent for me—is n't very well, and wants me to attend to some business for him. I must go, of course, confound it, and right away—on the eight o'clock train to-night. I wish you would tell me that you are sorry, Agony."

He was gazing most earnestly at her impassive countenance.

"I certainly can't justify my name in my amount of regret," she answered lightly.

"Nonsense !"

He struck off the heads of a clump of daisies by the roadside with his cane as he made the impatient exclamation. For some reason he forbore to pursue the subject.

"Exactly !" mused Miss Bascom as she saw them coming along the road. "I hope she feels now that the universe is in running order again. But he don't look as if he 'd had a fortune left him, or expected one in a hurry."

Arthur waited at the door-step for Agnes to ask him to enter—which she did not do.

"Good-by," she said, extending her hand with more cordiality than she had shown during the whole walk. "I hope I shall be in New York myself before very long ; I'll let you know when just as soon as I know myself."

At first she had not intended to say anything like the last clause of her sentence, but the expression of Arthur's face changed her resolution.

"You think I 'm queer to-day, I know you do," she added soberly. "So I am, and out of sorts, and you must n't mind it. I shall be all right again when I 'm once out of Duxberry."

"Heaven speed the day then! I wish you were going with me this evening."

"So do I, Arthur," she replied, with great heartiness, and she left him to get what meagre comfort he could from those few words.

Just inside the door was a lank, shambling figure successfully balanced on one leg, with mouth and eyes wide open,—Bob Gridley, who was evidently waiting for Agnes, and who never had the courage to approach her unless with some proffered service.

"O Miss Harry Burton," he jerked out in a hoarse whisper, "that Cosgrouge feller, he's goin' to be 'rested to-morrer, put in jail ef he don't look out. Can't you tell him, so's he will?"

"What do you mean?" Agnes asked, with a good deal of sharpness in the question.

"I don't know what I mean, that's what they said."

“What who said?”

“Them fellers he was playin’ cards with last night. He got all the money, an’ they was awful mad, an’ said Squire Holly he’d fix him, an’ get it back again. I heard ’em a-sayin’ so ’s afternoon, an’ I hurried home so’s to tell yer.”

More than one idea seemed slowly penetrating Agnes’s brain. She looked fixedly at Bob Gridley, who seemed to be honoured by even this attention. “You’ve done a good many kind things for me, Bob, since I’ve been here,” she said so slowly that the boy could absorb every word. “I wonder why?”

“O Miss Harry Burton, because you’re so splendid!”

He touched with the greatest reverence the fringe of the shawl which hung over her arm. Agnes smiled, but the smile was a very sad one.

“I’m very much obliged to you, Bob. You’re very good, and that’s better than being splendid, you know.”

“An’ the Cosgrouge feller?”

“He is going away to-night. You need n’t

worry about him. Who were the men, Bob, who were talking about him?"

"The fellers who work down to Tom Lawton's tin-shop, Bill Fuller, an' his brother, an'— Tom Lawton, he tried to stop 'em. He said that that Cosgrouge feller he was your friend, that you was n't to blame, an' they should n't do nothin' to make you feel bad —!"

Agnes listened intently, and seemed to be thinking hard.

"Of course you 've said nothing about this to any one else, Bob?"

He shook his head with the utmost vigor.

"Thank you," she said again.

Bob looked perfectly radiant.

Agnes passed on to make some change in her dress before going to the supper-table. As she arranged her hair she paused, brush in hand, and gazed into the looking-glass with much the same expression on her face as there had been on Dr. Davidge's when he had done the same thing an hour before. She fell into a long reverie over something which she met or missed there; over the events of her memorable day;

over the fortunate departure of Arthur Cosgrove, and forgot she was keeping the table standing, until little Charlie Maynard was sent to call her to supper.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. JACK GODFREY seemed at last in a fair way of realizing his greatest ambition. Mr. Haliburton had secured for him a position in the office of a Broad Street broker, and he decided to leave Duxberry immediately.

He was prepared for Sharley's opposition to the change, and simply laughed at her entreaties for him to relinquish the idea.

"One would suppose my position here was a fine one, Sharley," he said in reply to her, "and that I was running a great risk in giving it up."

"You have reason to believe, Jack, that Mr. Hall intends to give you the sole charge of the business when he gets ready to leave it. Would n't that be infinitely better than—"

"Oh, as for old Hall, his getting ready to do anything for me is as likely to be a matter of ten years, as anything else. In New York I

shall have a settled salary, almost twice as much as I have now, and a chance to do considerable outside business on my own responsibility. You don't look at it in the right way, Sharley. You're 'penny wise and pound foolish.' Now I believe in the adage, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.' "

Evidently he believed in it as a social as well as financial force. In response to the note from Agnes, conveying to him her father's message, he called to see her, and Agnes, feeling that evening particularly lonesome and homesick, received him with encouraging cordiality.

"I don't know how to thank you, Miss Hali-burton, for the great favor you have done me."

"For the favor my father has done you," she corrected.

"Yet it was you who offered to ask—"

"Oh, that was a very simple thing to do," she said in an off-hand way. "I'd do a hundred times as much as that for Sharley Kenyon any time. She's a perfectly splendid girl, and it seems such a pity for her to spend all her days in Duxberry."

"I thank you for her as well as for myself, as of course you know," Jack hurried to say. "I wish I could convince Sharley that I'm doing the best possible thing for both of us. I'm very sure of it myself, and I know that you think so."

"Oh, Sharley will think differently about it after a little while, when you've made a success of your new business. I've no doubt that you will make lots of money in a very short time, more than you could make in Duxberry in years and years."

"If you would talk with her about it, try to convince her—you've had so much knowledge of your father's business that—"

"My father makes money just as easy! And he's made a great deal for other people. They just send him money—those who live out of town—and he invests it for them. They carry on their own business at home at the same time, so that is all clear gain—all extra."

"And they pay your father a commission?"

"I suppose so."

"Does he never lose?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes. He has been very much troubled this summer, the market has been so unsettled, as he says. But he's generally very successful. He is sure that everything will be all right again very soon."

"When you return to New York, Miss Haliburton, will you allow me to call upon you? I assure you I shall appreciate the permission."

"Why, certainly. Then I can hear constantly from Sharley, and—"

"From Duxberry, were you going to say?" Jack asked with a laugh.

Agnes made a wry face.

There was something in which she was much more interested, but she hardly knew how to introduce the subject. She felt considerable curiosity as to the impression made by Arthur Cosgrove's visit. Jack Godfrey on his part was even more curious concerning the circumstances of the ride home with Agnes and Winnie on the opening night of the fair, and his sudden departure from town the next day.

"What does Dr. Davidge say about your cousin?" he inquired.

"He was very anxious about her at first, but she is improving now very fast."

"I suppose her visit to the fair was too much for her?"

"Yes."

"I never was so astonished as I was that night when Lon Morse came driving back with Mr. Cosgrove."

"Lon Morse!" Agnes repeated.

"Why, yes. Did n't you know?"

Agnes did not reply.

"I couldn't imagine where they found each other, for I saw Mr. Cosgrove going off with you and Winnie, while Lon was busy with his own affairs. But he is a sly one, Lon. He and your friend got on very well together, though they kept pretty dark about it, for some reason or other, I'm sure I don't know what."

"Why, what made you think so?" Agnes asked, a good deal surprised, as Jack had supposed she would be.

"Oh, I came across them that afternoon in the store, when Mr. Cosgrove was borrowing a little money of him, and that night Lon went straight

to the hotel with him instead of coming back to the hall. He stayed some time there, too."

Agnes wanted to ask many questions, but she restrained the impulse.

"Mr. Morse does n't seem like a person who would care for Ar—Mr. Cosgrove," she said instead. "I fancied he disliked him."

"Your friend made himself very popular in Duxberry, Miss Haliburton. I know of only one person who—"

"Who—what?" Agnes asked impulsively.

"Excuse me," Jack said. "I spoke hastily, and I—"

"But I can't excuse you, Mr. Godfrey. I want to know what you mean."

"My feeling was at any rate a disinterested one; you will admit that."

"Your feeling!" Agnes repeated, wonderingly. "Then it was you who—"

"I had not intended to tell you this," he replied, apparently with a great deal of embarrassment.

"But as you have told me," Agnes said, with some petulance, "I suppose you are willing to *explain* your reason."

"Perhaps it is because we are all such old fogies in Duxberry, but for myself I could n't approve of all that—of course you did n't approve yourself of that unprincipled trick he served Alick McFarland. To think of Lon Morse finding him the next day, half dead by the roadside! No wonder it made so much talk in town."

It was the first that Agnes had heard of the sequel to that night's adventure, as Jack Godfrey suspected. Her face was a study which he seemed to find peculiarly interesting.

"I suppose playing for stakes is common enough among city fellows, but it's rather a novelty in Duxberry, especially carried on with such a high hand. I might say, good hand, also, I suppose, as he invariably won all the money. Perhaps I'm too particular about some things, but it does n't seem to me, Miss Haliburton, that—"

"Well," Agnes said, as he hesitated again.

"I cannot help regretting, if you insist upon me saying so, that a person so reckless of his own reputation and of the comfort of other

people, should have your happiness in his keeping, Miss Haliburton, one so much his superior in—”

Agnes made an angry and impatient gesture.

“I think I understood you to say that Mr. Cosgrove made himself very popular in Duxberry?”

“Until the last night of his stay, Miss Haliburton. He was injudicious. Perhaps some would not think of giving it any harder name. I am profoundly sorry that I have offended you,” he went on. “I should not have said so much if you had not insisted.”

Agnes did not seem inclined to speak just then.

“However you may judge me, Miss Haliburton, please remember that I can have but one reason for the feeling I have expressed. If you knew my high estimate of you, and my desire to—”

“I’ll take all that for granted,” Agnes said, a little shortly. “How soon are you going to New York, Mr. Godfrey?”

“Not until you say you forgive me, Miss Haliburton.”

Agnes laughed at the unexpected answer, though the instant before she had felt in anything but a laughing mood.

"You will not detain me long, I hope," he said, with the smile which so many persons found irresistible.

"Not an instant longer, if you make that the condition."

"I would not offend you for my right hand, as you know."

"Why should you?" she responded, with a little toss of the head, and she laughed again, though she did not intend to. A certain tenderness in Jack Godfrey's voice struck her as exceedingly comical.

But the young man was doomed to disappointment in the plans he had formed. A letter came to him the next day. It was an important looking document on a very large and very heavy sheet of paper, and written in a most imposing hand. At least a third of the sheet was covered with steel-plate engraving, wherein, with many artistic flourishes, was set forth the fact that "Hope, Dodge, & Hazard, Mem-

bers of the New York Stock Exchange, would execute orders for the purchase and sale of Stocks on reasonable margin, also orders for the purchase and sale of Railroad Stocks and Bonds on moderate margin, customers securing the benefit of twenty years' experience in the business." The additional item, "Small orders solicited," was added in finer letters, but even more extensive flourishes, very gratifying to Jack's chirographical tastes.

But the information which the letter conveyed was most disagreeable and unwelcome to the young man, for Hope, Dodge, & Hazard most respectfully begged to be released from the promise made to Mr. John Haliburton to make a place for Mr. Jack Godfrey in their office. It had been given to the first-mentioned gentleman as a personal favor. Since that time circumstances had arisen which made it necessary for the firm to sever, not only all business, but all social, relations with the party in question, and decline to receive into their employment any person of his recommending.

Jack's first thought was naturally for himself,

and it was some minutes before he realized the full significance of the letter, recalling at the same time Sharley's doubt concerning Mr. Haliburton's methods of transacting business. Evidently something was wrong with the gentleman, at least in his relations with Hope, Dodge, & Hazard, and, later, Jack found himself wondering in what way, if any, it would affect Agnes. His own confidence in Mr. Haliburton dwindled rapidly,—and apparently in proportion to the imposing manner in which the information concerning him was set forth.

Jack at once took the letter to Sharley, who read it through with a thoughtful face, and returned it without a word.

"This is anything but a pleasant dose for me, as you may believe," he said in great ill-humor. "To think, too, of all I've said about it to the boys! No doubt I shall be a laughing-stock for the next six months if I don't get out of Duxberry, and I'm sure I don't see my way clear to that, now. If I had any acquaintances there—in New York, I mean—it would be very different."

"Do you notice the expression 'make a place' for you? It seems you were not particularly needed, Jack, and I should n't like to go into a situation on those terms, if I were you."

"You wondered, I remember, how I could consent to take it on any terms," and Jack laughed rather disagreeably.

"I wish for Agnes's sake I knew what the trouble is with her father. She is beginning to be very much worried about him. He writes irregularly, and she says very indefinitely. She grows more anxious every day."

Jack gave considerable thought, as was natural, to the letter which he had received, but not wholly to the disappointing words it contained. He studied the elaborate engraving at the head of the sheet while he meditated profoundly on a few casual words spoken by Agnes in his call upon her the preceding evening. "They just send him money, those who live out of town, and he invests it for them. They carry on their own business at home at the same time, so that is all clear gain—all extra."

Evidently Hope, Dodge, & Hazard transacted

business on the same general principle. They had had twenty years' experience,—that surely was an item in their favor; and that small orders were solicited was an item in his,—provided he concluded, after sufficient deliberation, to invest some of his small savings in the hope of making them larger. What he had saved he had saved simply because he had had no particular use for it, not from any idea of thrift or economy. Jack was entirely alone in the world, and consequently independent. As for making any definite provision for his contemplated marriage, he simply deferred all thought of that till a more convenient season, when he should be making money rapidly enough to make the saving worth while.

He finally concluded—as it needed no prophet to foresee—that he would take his chances, and experiment a little in the line of stocks and bonds. To this end he wrote to Hope, Dodge, & Hazard, stating that he had not the least personal acquaintance with Mr. Haliburton, but was indebted to a member of the family for Mr. Haliburton's efforts on his behalf. Much as he

regretted the loss of a position, he still more deplored that gentleman's misfortunes, though he had no idea of the nature of them. He would like to be considered a candidate for any vacancy in the office, provided they felt no prejudice against him on Mr. Haliburton's account. He begged leave to enclose a check for one hundred dollars, requesting them to invest it for him according to their own judgment, and adding that he should be happy to send them small sums from time to time for the same purpose.

A portion of this letter—in fact all of it but the last two items—he reported to Sharley, and it is only fair to the young man to suppose that his suppression of them arose from a desire to spare her any anxiety.

CHAPTER XX.

WINNIE MAYNARD improved rapidly, and at the end of three weeks was able to sit up, to walk about her room a little, and to receive a certain number of callers each day. The regret at what was termed her "pull-back" was as universal throughout the town as the rejoicing at her recovery, and manifested itself in various ways. She spoke of some of them to Dr. Davidge.

"Little Nannie Lawton has sent me a pin-cushion, the first thing she ever made," and she exhibited the shapeless little article, intended to be circular in form, but truthfully characterized by Miss Bascom as "wopper-jawed."

"And such a letter as Mrs. Lawton has written me! It seems that Tom has lately been exposed to some very strong temptations, which

he has resisted in such a way as to make her feel more encouraged about him than she has ever been."

"And of course she gives you the sole credit."

"I did not say so," Winnie replied quickly.

"Will you let me read the letter?"

Dr. Davidge touched it as it lay upon the table, exactly as she had done, half smiling as he did so.

"That is not necessary, Dr. Davidge. You must take my word for it. But I have some curiosity to know more of the circumstances. I shall ask Mrs. Lawton when I see her."

"You need not wait till then, Miss Winnie, if you are anxious to know, and I was an eye-witness of one of his victories. Mr. Arthur Cosgrove made friends among the young men in town quite rapidly when he first came, by entertaining them at the hotel bar, and he more than once included Tom Lawton in his invitations."

Winnie looked very grave.

"There's a new factory to be opened here

before long," the doctor went on, "or rather an old one. Business is to be started again down on the river. Some Boston men have bought the property—furniture manufacturers. Tom Lawton has been mentioned as candidate for foreman. What do you think of that?"

"Oh, Dr. Davidge!"

"Of course some one must vouch for him. His ability is not the only thing to be considered. I took the liberty of stating that you would be personally responsible for him if he were put into the position."

Dr. Davidge gratified himself with a long look at Winnie's expressive face before he spoke again.

"Tom will be very careful how he compromises you, and his reformation seems to be a certain thing now. I think you will run no risk in taking the responsibility mentioned, else I should not have spoken of it. To think what you—in sickness and seclusion—have done for that family!"

"If it had n't been for you, how could I have done anything?" Winnie asked. "It's a long

time since Tom has had one of his coffee-lunches, as he used to call them. Agnes made the coffee for him the last time."

"Under your direction?"

"Yes, and really seemed to enjoy it; though I shall never forget how disgusted she was before she found it was my idea to furnish him with it to keep him from longing for strong drink."

"And it always had the desired effect?"

"Always, and such a simple thing to do!"

"You are not reading much, I hope, Miss Winnie?"

As the doctor spoke, he took up a book which lay near by. There were always books upon the little table, and he invariably examined any one of them which gave evidence of present use. In this way he closely followed the line of her tastes and thoughts, though seldom sharing the former or agreeing with the latter.

It was George Macdonald's "Sir Gibbie" that he took up this time, and a little paper-cutter lay between the leaves. It had Agnes Hali-burton's initials on the handle.

"I am not reading at all, doctor," Winnie said, "so you see I am doing even better than to use what little permission you gave me. My cousin is reading to me."

"It is from the little library you and Sharley have set up, I see."

"Yes."

The doctor read aloud the first words which caught his eye, a paragraph of three lines.

"Whatever is capable of aspiring must be troubled that it may wake and aspire—then troubled still that it may hold fast, be itself and aspire still."

"Is that a specimen of the book?" he asked with an almost imperceptible sneer.

Winnie did not answer. The expression on the doctor's face was the one she most disliked and dreaded.

He turned back a few pages and read again.

"The will of the brooding spirit must be a grand one indeed to enclose so much of what cannot be its will, and turn all to its purpose of eternal good. Our knowledge of humanity, how much more our knowledge of the father

of it, is moving as yet but in the first elements."

There were faint, blue lines drawn along the margin of the pages, beside these sentences.

"It is thus that you indorse the sentiments of the author, I suppose," the doctor observed, still in the same tone.

"Yes, but I should not take such a liberty with the library books if I had not been asked—having more leisure than any one else in our club—to mark any passages that I thought worth special attention, and I certainly think those are," she added with emphasis.

"And the books, after you have read them, go into whose hands? I really have no idea of the extent of your club or its patrons."

"There is hardly a family in town but is more or less interested, from Dr. Holbrook's down. Tom Lawton will read this aloud to his wife while she sews evenings, and very likely to Tom also, or some parts of it, being the story of a boy about his age."

"Does your cousin find it interesting?" the doctor inquired with an expressive shrug.

"Such passages as these, I mean particularly," and he pointed to the page.

"You will be surprised if I say yes, but that is the truth. We have had many long talks about some of these very things, and I've been surprised myself to see how much Agnes has enjoyed our discussions."

"And she accepts all these—what you and Macdonald consider truths?" the doctor inquired, changing the first form of his question.

"She does not reject them—as you do."

"She has not tested them as thoroughly as I have—and found them fit for nothing but rejection."

"I would rather have you say that to me than to her. You know I can make a liberal allowance."

"There is no necessity for any, Miss Winnie. You know I am sincere."

"I know you would like to be. You try so hard to persuade yourself that what you want to believe is the only truth."

"And you think I do not succeed?"

"Not fully, fortunately."

The doctor gave another of his shrugs. The expression of his face had not changed, except to grow more gloomy as he talked.

"It is Macdonald who says, 'More even than a knowledge of the truth is a readiness to receive it.' I believe that perfectly. Agnes has n't the knowledge, yet, but she wants it. That is the next best thing."

"A knowledge of what?" the doctor asked bluntly. "If the question asked by Pilate hundreds of years ago, has ever been answered, I have never known it. What is truth?"

"I cannot answer it either, Dr. Davidge; you know I can't. I simply know that some things must be true, because whatever is best and noblest in us loves them, responds to them, and experience proves them to be the best for us."

"Suffering, trial, for instance,—all things that baffle and disappoint and pain and torture us,—those things you decide, then, to be the best for us?"

"I don't decide it, Dr. Davidge. I said experience proves it."

"Yours has been such an extensive one, Mis-

Winnie! Because you fancy"—he laid great stress on that word—"that you have somehow grown better by being shut up in one room for almost a year, you conclude—"

"You're not fair!" Winnie protested. "I can't explain half I mean, but I feel it and I believe it. I suppose that is faith."

"For which you can thank both your inheritance and your education—and ought to, when it gives you so much consolation for your own and other people's troubles."

"Yet you would take it from me, if you could," Winnie said reproachfully.

"I! Heaven forbid!"

A different look shot into his face. He threw the book down and seized both her hands.

"Take that back," he said, as reproachfully in his turn, "for it is n't true."

"It seems so," she replied, with a feeble little smile that suggested tears near at hand.

"I should never talk to you, my child, if I did not believe that your faith was too secure to be shaken by any words of mine."

"And so it is, but I did not know that you thought so."

"I should be in poor business," the doctor resumed earnestly, "to pull one off a strong, stanch ship into mid-ocean when I had not a raft or a chip to offer in exchange. I disagree with you—you know I do that honestly—to find out the reasons for the faith. Of course you can understand that?"

Winnie assented.

"Do you never have any other reason?" she asked gravely.

"A hope that I may sometime believe as you do?" he said quickly, interpreting her thought. "I have no reason to hope for that," and he shook his head. "I did once, years ago. My father taught me as you were taught."

"And then?"

"That was the theoretical. I found practical life a very different thing. If I am morose, hard, bitter to-day, it is what my life has made me—the result of the misery the years brought me—Therein my experience has been different from yours, but it has been a more extensive one—

Would you like to hear it some time, Miss Winnie?" he asked with startling suddenness.

"If you would like to tell me," she answered, "in fact, whether you would or not. I have wondered about it a great deal, Dr. Davidge," she concluded with frankness.

"Of course your cousin is engaged to that young Cosgrove?" the doctor asked.

"No."

"That is better than I hoped. Has she told you that she told me the cause of this relapse of yours?"

"No. But I took for granted that she had."

The doctor gave a low whistle.

"Why, you seem surprised."

"As I am—at your confidence in her."

"One would suppose that my cousin Agnes had done you some injury," Winnie said slowly.

"Oh, I am easily prejudiced and I'm obstinate—two very bad things. Besides, I know her only slightly. But the way in which she explained the circumstances of that night certainly increased my respect for her."

"Agnes will never feel again towards Arthur

Cosgrove as she did before that visit, I am almost sure. It would certainly be a calamity for her to marry such a man, yet she was drifting into an engagement with him, that perhaps nothing but this visit, disastrous as it seemed, would ever have prevented."

"So you think there may have been some benefit in it, after all?"

"I hope so. Agnes is very fond of him, and his father is a very wealthy man, occupying a high social position. You know these things are of great value in Agnes's eyes, for she has been trained to regard them above all others. This experience has seemed to be a great shock and disappointment to her, yet she occasionally tries to argue herself into the belief that his faults are not such serious ones, after all. I don't know how it will end. I can only hope for the best"

CHAPTER XXI.

FIXY DULLWEDGE was in trouble, and of an unusual kind. Floggings, no matter how severe, had long ceased to inspire any particular terror in anticipation, or any special regret in retrospect—as his father and mother realized with a sort of despair, not knowing of any other process under the sun whereby a child could be kept in restraint or be made to render obedience. His propensity to play truant increased in proportion as his fear of punishment diminished, and if Sharley Kenyon's conscience had been less sensitive, she would have been thankful to have him absent himself altogether. When he did honor the school with his presence, he was more disorderly and unruly than formerly, and the despair of his teacher equalled that of his parents.

The Dullwedge family were French Canadians, who had crossed the line into New Hampshire when the Duxberry broom factory was doing a sweeping business. They had remained in the town after the factory was closed and most of the hands dispersed, apparently because it was easier to remain than to leave. They lived in a dilapidated little house just outside the village, and a home-made sign placed over the door informed the public, or that part of it which took sufficient notice, that "Boots and shoes" were "repared on Shortnotis." Jean Dullwedge was really a good cobbler,—better, perhaps, than one might suppose from the orthographical fashion in which he announced his trade; and enough business fell into his hands to keep the family in comparative comfort.

There was but one child besides Fixy, a beautiful little girl, seven years old. Malo Dullwedge was a great favorite in Duxberry, differing as much from her brother in that respect as in all others. The only object on earth for which Fixy appeared to entertain the least affection was his little sister, and the

amount which he lavished upon her seemed great enough to supply all deficiencies in other directions.

Sharley Kenyon, her day's work just finished, sat at her desk in a dejected attitude and apparently too much absorbed in her own thoughts to hear a shuffling noise upon the doorstep. At any rate she did not look up until a coarse, grimy hand was laid on her arm. Fixy Dullwedge stood close beside her—his first appearance on the premises for three days.

"Oh, if you please, Miss Kenyon!"

Sharley was startled at the expression on the boy's face.

"Why, Fixy, what is it?" she exclaimed.

"Malo's sick," he answered, with a dry sob.

"She does n't know me, and her eyes are so bright and she talks so queer. Oh! Oh!"

The child was remarkably delicate in health, for which reason she had never been sent to school, but it was the first sickness she had ever had, so far as Fixy's recollection extended.

"When was she taken?" Sharley asked.

"Yesterday. Father licked me when I got

home last night, and would n't let me see her: and I ran away early this morning, and Neddie Thomas said she was awful bad and when I got home she did n't know me, she did n't know me, Miss Kenyon," and Fixy's grief was most distressing. "Can't you just go and see her, Miss Kenyon? Mebbe she'll know you."

Sharley needed no urging. The boy's anxiety would have been cause enough for her going, even if she had not been fond enough of little Malo to be anxious on her own account. She put on her hat at once, locked up the school-house and started across the fields with Fixy.

"Has the doctor seen Malo?" she asked.

"He ain't home. He's gone somewhere. He's a-coming soon as he gets back."

Little Malo Dullwedge was very ill indeed. Sharley was sure of that from the first look at her. Jean Dullwedge sat close beside the bed with a stolid, hopeless expression of countenance, while his wife, terrified and inefficient, bustled about the room in vain attempts to relieve the sufferer.

The child appeared to recognize Sharley,

holding out her hands as if in mute appeal to be taken from her uncomfortable bed. Sharley lifted her in her arms, the child nestled down upon her breast and gradually fell into a troubled sleep. Fixy stood near by, a look of the profoundest gratitude upon his face.

"Now, Fixy," Sharley said at last, "I shall stay here till the doctor comes, and I want you to go and tell my mother where I am and that I may not be home till late."

The boy departed with alacrity.

It was several hours before Dr. Davidge appeared. He had been suddenly called some distance out of town, and it was late before he reached home. Fixy was there again when he arrived, too impatient to wait for him elsewhere, and without a moment's delay the doctor accompanied him to his own house. He was prepared to find Sharley there, but from the account which Fixy gave of Malo's illness he greatly regretted that she had gone.

His fears were not without foundation, and a certain expression in his face roused Sharley's suspicions also.

"How long have you been here?" he inquired.

"Since half-past four."

It was then nine o'clock.

"And she has been in your lap how long?"

"Ever since I came, till an hour ago. I felt a little faint, and went out and walked around a few minutes. I took her again as soon as I came in."

"Humph!"

"She was quiet in no other way. She has suffered so much at intervals."

"She will suffer less now. Her face was not like this, I suppose, when you first came?"

His tone was a significant one. Sharley shook her head.

"I am more sorry than I can tell to find you here, Sharley, but it's too late for regrets. Of course you know that you cannot go back to school at present?"

Yes, Sharley had thought of it, as the gravity of her face showed.

"I shall stay here instead," she said slowly.

"That is the best way now."

"I shall not allow it! I positively forbid it!" the doctor exclaimed hotly.

Sharley gave a comprehensive glance around the room. It spoke as eloquently as any words could do, of its poverty and forlornness, the incapacity, fear, and loneliness of its inmates.

"I shall stay, doctor," she repeated, her eyes resting at last on the pitiful little face upon the pillow. "Don't make it harder by opposing me. My duty seems to me plain enough."

"You have duties in other directions, it appears to me," was the doctor's grim reply.

"But this has been given me instead. I did not seek it or expect it, and you say yourself that I cannot go back to school. There is only one thing for me to do now."

"And who can take your place?"

Sharley pondered a moment.

"I would rather Agnes Haliburton would take it than anybody else. She has spent several days with me, and knows something about the school. She has more time, too, than Annie Bond or any of the girls I could ask."

"Do you think it's likely she would do you such a favor?"

"Very likely, doctor. You know I have a better opinion of her than you have. She's one of the most kind-hearted girls I ever knew."

"And as selfish as —"

"She does not know that she's selfish. I'm sure she won't be selfish about this."

"She must have improved very rapidly of late!"

"She has certainly changed a good deal since she came to Duxberry, though it's only three months ago. That is Winnie Maynard's doings. I should think you might have seen something of it, Dr. Davidge."

"I use no spiritual microscope, Miss Sharley."

A buggy drove up to the door. The doctor stepped to it quickly, went out, and closed it behind him. He was gone several minutes.

"Lon Morse has come for you, Sharley," he said on his return. "I have explained the circumstances, and told him your decision. But it is not too late for you to reconsider it," he added hastily.

Sharley shook her head.

“I would like to send some messages by him to my mother and Agnes.”

“I will take them to him. You had better stay here, if you still insist upon having your own way.”

Lon Morse drove away a few minutes after, not so rapidly as he had come, and if Sharley's heart sank within her at the sound of the departing wheels, it was not to be wondered at. She had been taken at her word, and she believed the word a necessary one. She believed, too, as she had said, that her duty was plain enough ; still she did not find it any less hard on that account. It was nearly midnight before Dr. Davidge left the house. Malo had fallen asleep,—a condition in which her father had been for some time. Fixy sat perfectly still beside the bed, watching his sister with wide-open, sleepless eyes. Mrs. Dullwedge in the kitchen was vigorously at work upon some neglected washing, and Sharley was at liberty to return to the train of thought which had been so strangely interrupted that afternoon. Another one, however, took its place for a while.

The two were finally blended, and it was not until the daybreak of a dull, rainy morning came creeping into the room, that Sharley closed her heavy eyes and unconsciously dropped her head upon little Malo's pillow.

She had sent no message to Jack Godfrey. Lon Morse pondered on the fact as he drove home, and settled several things in his own way before he reached the end of his trip. But the settlement was in no way conducive to a happy state of mind, if one might judge from the expression of his face. After putting up his horse, he went rather reluctantly to make the family acquainted with the condition of things at the Dullwedge cottage and Sharley's resolution, after which he locked himself into his own room, pulled a great heap of books about him, and sat up half the night.

CHAPTER XXII.

LON MORSE was at the Maynard farm-house early the next morning. Miss Bascom was busy in her preparations for breakfast, and to her he related as briefly as possible the experience of the preceding night, and the request which Sharley had sent to Agnes.

Miss Bascom's feelings appeared too deep to reach the surface in words. She tied her apron-strings into a harder knot, compressed her lips in a firmer fashion, and mashed the potatoes with most expressive energy. Lon moved towards the door.

"You'll please tell her as soon as you can, Miss Angeline," he said as he prepared to go.

"I thought you were to tell her," she responded, transferring her attentions from the potatoes to the coffee-pot. "Breakfast will be

ready in a minute. You must stay, and tell her yourself."

"I would rather not," he said a little stiffly, "and as it's not necessary—"

"You promised Sharley, did n't you?"

But there was no need to discuss a point which was settled by the appearance of Agnes herself. She came hurriedly into the kitchen, with a soft white shawl wrapped around her shoulders, and shivered a little as she approached the fire.

"Has it rained all night, aunt Angeline?" she asked, not seeing that there was any one else present.

"Pretty nigh. I set the fire going in the parlor this morning, it was so cold. You can take Mr. Morse in there. He's come on an errand."

Agnes looked up surprised, and, after an instant's hesitation, turned and led the way out of the kitchen. Lon Morse followed her.

"It's a very disagreeable errand that I have come upon," he said, not taking the chair to which she motioned him, while she seated her-

self. "Little Malo Dullwedge is very sick. Sharley went to the house before she knew of the contagion—yesterday afternoon—and is going to stay. Of course it would not be safe for her to go back to school, even if she left there, and she asks of you the great favor of taking her place for a little while."

Agnes did not immediately reply. Her eyes opened wide with surprise and terror, and her first thought was—naturally—a selfish one. It was not to be supposed that she should take kindly to so startling a proposition, so suddenly made. A more generous impulse took its place after a moment's consideration.

"If I could do it—if I knew more about it," she said, with unusual timidity.

"Sharley has great confidence in your ability, Miss Haliburton."

"Because she knows so little about it; nothing at all, in fact," and Agnes tried to laugh, which was evidently as much of an effort as her endeavor to appear at her ease. It was the first time that she had seen Lon Morse since her memorable drive with him on the first night of

the county fair. It was anything but a pleasant experience to recall, and it was anything but agreeable to face the hero of that adventure. Privately she had often wished that it might be her good fortune to get away from Duxberry without meeting him again.

"The pupil who is hardest to manage will not be there to trouble you, you know. Poor Fixy! He is quite broken down over this affliction."

"But I've never attempted to teach any one, not even a single child—and to begin where Sharley leaves off—"

Agnes stopped abruptly, as if it were impossible to find words with which to finish the sentence.

"I—" Lon began, then stopped as abruptly.

Agnes looked at him in a helpless sort of way, and as if longing for some suggestion.

"I was about to say," he resumed, as if still in doubt whether he had better say it, "that perhaps I could give you some help myself. I had the school several days last spring when Mrs. Kenyon was sick. I know all the children, *and—*"

"Oh, Mr. Morse, if you only would! Of course, whatever you do for me would be helping Sharley."

"Of course. I would do it all myself if I had the time, and enjoy it too, but it's impossible to leave the farm-work just at present."

"I suppose I'm to go this morning?" and Agnes glanced out of the window rather ruefully.

"I am sorry you have n't a pleasanter day for the beginning of your work. But you will very likely have a smaller attendance on account of the rain."

"Then I shall be reconciled to the weather," Agnes replied. "Poor Sharley! What a doleful day it will be for her."

Agnes Haliburton was not given to spiritual analysis, of herself or of anybody else, and it was well too, no doubt, that she was not conscious of any special growth in grace. But in that moment of self-forgetfulness and sympathy she reached greater heights in spiritual development than she had ever before attained.

Lon Morse hurried away, and Agnes ate her

breakfast in a most absorbed frame of mind. Miss Bascom was conscious of some curiosity as she watched her, while Bob Gridley and the Maynard children were delighted at the information that Agnes was to "keep school"—not that they loved Sharley less, or Agnes more, but change and variety are as acceptable to the younger members of society as to their elders, both of whom are sometimes equally illogical.

"Better hitch up and take you over, had n't I, Agnes?" her uncle asked, with his kindly smile.

"Oh no, indeed, uncle Nathan," she answered hurriedly. "It does n't rain very hard, and it's not at all windy. Besides, I want to get my courage up on the way; and I'd better begin to be brave as soon as possible."

"You tell little Ellen Barker if she's at school to-day," Miss Bascom remarked, "that I'll be at her mother's next week, sure. Winnie is so much better I can leave by that time, and it's such a comfort, Agnes, to see you rolling up your sleeves to go to work!"

Agnes, more literally putting on water-proof

and rubbers in her cousin's room, seemed to grow more and more excited at the prospect of her undertaking.

"I only hope I can get along without any help from your pompous Alonzo Morse, Winnie. He's just as disagreeable in his way as Dr. Davidge is in his."

"Why, Agnes, they are no more alike than—"

"I did n't say they were alike, but they can both be disagreeable, for all that. Both of them say in manner, though not in words, 'I disapprove of you, but I'm obliged to tolerate you.' Now isn't that pleasant!" and Agnes made a wry face. "Your Alonzo Morse is n't quite so bad as the dear doctor, but then he's not quite so old. Age has its privileges, you know. If Alonzo were as old as the doctor, I should be annihilated—nowhere," and she gave an expressive fling to the veil she was winding about her hat.

"Whom do you mean by 'Alonzo'?" Winnie inquired, with a merry laugh.

"Why, Mr. Morse. Whom else should I

mean?" and Agnes looked up in genuine surprise. "Far be it from me to indulge in the 'Lon' liberty. I tremble to think of its possible consequences, should he ever find it out."

"But his name is n't Alonzo, my dear cousin. I never knew that you thought it was. It's Leonidas, and he's just the fellow to have the name of that grand old Greek. I wish you knew Lon Morse as we know him, Agnes, here in Duxberry."

"'Tis n't at all necessary. Your appreciation is sufficient. There, I'm bundled up at last," and, as she faced her cousin, Winnie thought she had never seen her look more animated or more lovely,—and yet Saratoga and its society was never farther away from her thoughts than at that moment.

"I actually believe you're anxious to try it, after all," Winnie said to her.

"I don't know but I am, Winnie. There's a novelty about it, that's one thing. And, positively, Winnie, I don't suppose you'll believe me, but I have felt sort of ashamed of myself ever so many times when you've made me

realize what a drone in the hive I've always been."

"I've made you realize! Why, Agnes!"

"Oh, such a thing as that don't need words. You know well enough what I mean. Where can those children be? They said they'd let me know when it was time to start."

The question was answered in effect before it was half spoken. A skirmish outside the door revealed the presence of the children, and hinted at some slight difference of opinion between them. Agnes threw it open with a suddenness which struck consternation to their contending souls.

"Can't I carry the umbrella, cousin Agnes?" little Mary Maynard asked, the first to recover herself.

"I wanter myself," Bob remarked, clutching at it with evident determination.

"Mary's only a girl, and I'm most as tall as you are, so now," Charlie replied to him.

"Where's the other umbrella, Charlie?" Winnie asked, following Agnes to the door.

"Bob broke it yesterday licking Kump," Charlie answered, with amazing promptness.

"I guess Lon Morse is comin' for you, Miss Harry Burton," Bob announced, his attention diverted by the sound of wheels which the next moment rolled up to the door.

"It's your Greek hero, sure enough," Agnes said, under her breath, to her cousin. "He's just a little too officious. I could have walked as well as not. Remember," she added, with great solemnity, "you're to have a letter from father for me when I get back. It's surer than ever to come to-day," and kissing her good-by she went out to the front door.

Lon stood ready to help her into the buggy as if it were something to which they had both been accustomed all the days of their lives. Agnes became instantly so conscious of this fact that it was with a little embarrassment that she said,—

"You need not have taken all this trouble, Mr. Morse."

"I never let Sharley walk in the rain when I can drive her over," Lon replied, and his tone confirmed the impression he had given her, that he was showing her no unusual attention.

"Now scud along, youngsters," he added to the boys, while he took little Mary Maynard into his lap and drove as fast as possible to the school-house.

There were indications that he had been there before, that morning, for a brisk fire was burning in the stove, and the room seemed very cosy in contrast to the bleak, raw air outside. Agnes, while wondering at his thoughtfulness, almost resented it, as implying some obligation; yet, after all, she reflected, the fire was quite as much for the children's comfort as for her own.

Lon waited until all the pupils who would be likely to present themselves that morning had arrived, and, as was natural, had looked with a good deal of surprise at the two substitutes filling their teacher's place—neither of them able to usurp it in the young hearts.

"Now, children," Lon began without the least formality. "You will be sorry to hear that little Malo Dullwedge is sick, and that Miss Kenyon is helping to take care of her. She will not come back to school till Malo is better. She has asked her friend, Miss Hali-

burton, who is Miss Winnie Maynard's cousin, you know, to take her place here, and she has been kind enough to do it. Of course you will treat her as you know Miss Kenyon would like to have you?"

He made his statement in an interrogative form which elicited a hearty,—in fact, a somewhat deafening—shout of "Yes, sir!" which left no doubt of the sincerity of their intentions. Lon did not leave the school-house until he had set all the classes to work, and made out a little memorandum to assist Agnes in assigning their lessons for the next day. She was sorry that it was valuable help instead of interference, and that she was obliged to acknowledge it as such.

Her first day was a successful one, but she was inclined to believe that the fact was due to the efforts she had made to entertain the children. In spite of their good intentions, they were not invariably quiet, attentive, or studious; and Agnes, in alarm at the possibility of an outbreak, taxed her ingenuity to the utmost to prevent such a calamity. She experienced the greatest possible relief when the school was

finally dismissed. The rain was over, the day had grown brighter. Agnes walked home with the children,—Bob in undisputed possession of the now useless umbrella,—feeling that though she had effectually thrown a sop to Cerberus that day, the monster might not always be so easily appeased.

Winnie was impatiently awaiting her. She had missed her that day more than she could tell, which was not strange, perhaps, considering that they had been inseparable companions for so many weeks. She was anxious to hear, too, whether or not she had been successful in her new field, though of that she had little doubt. And to Agnes's great joy a letter from her father lay on Winnie's little table.

"What can be the reason that he's not written before!" she exclaimed, as she seized it and tore open the envelope. "Of course you'll let me read it first, Winnie, though I know you're dying to hear all that's been going on to-day."

It was Agnes's habit to be polite, or what she considered so, under all circumstances. Her

definition of politeness might easily have been improved upon, and made to include civility to a number of persons who received no particular consideration. It was nothing new for her to excuse herself while reading a letter, but it struck Winnie as something quite new for her to think of others' comfort or curiosity while so doing. To Winnie the slight fact was pleasantly significant.

The letter was a very long one, and, to Winnie's further surprise, Agnes did not wait to read it all through, contenting herself with glancing it over, reading sentences here and there, and folding it up, rather than keep Winnie waiting.

"It's a regular love-letter, too," she said joyously. "He's been too busy to write, did not realize how long a time it had been or how anxious I was, and he's sent me this," she concluded, holding up a check for thirty-five dollars.

The relation of her day's experience was very entertaining to Winnie, and the two girls laughed so much and so heartily that Miss Bascom put

her head into the door to enjoy the fun with them. "I can't come in," she said, "and I could n't sit down if I did," but somehow she managed to accomplish both within a minute or two and hear the end of Agnes's report.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LITTLE Malo Dullwedge lay very sick for nearly two weeks, at the end of which time she passed away from all suffering. Before that time her mother had succumbed to the fearful disease, and within twenty-four hours after the burial of the little one, Fixy himself found his grief somewhat dulled by his own prostration.

They were dark days for the family and for Sharley Kenyon. When that dreadful present had receded far into the past, she used to look back upon it occasionally with profound wonder at her own endurance. She had no help except from Dr. Davidge, who gave liberally of his time, day and night. Lon Morse submitted with very ill grace to his orders when he imperatively forbade him rendering any assistance. Though longing to be of use from the first, he

had not contended the point, until Fixy fell ill also. In spite of the doctor's orders he would have taken his place at the boy's bedside, had not Sharley herself joined the opposition, and declared herself able to get along alone. It was a great trial to the young man, who was not easily shaken in his opinions, and who firmly believed that they were both making a serious mistake.

The doctor was in daily communication with him, and thereby kept Sharley informed of whatever it was necessary or interesting for her to know. Lon in his turn went regularly to Winnie, who depended upon him for news of her friend, and occasionally to the school-house, in which Agnes was finding considerable up-hill work.

She had nearly finished "Sir Gibbie" notwithstanding her new employment, sitting up nights to read it, and enjoying equally as much the repetition of it in the little time she found to read aloud to her cousin. Novel-reading was no new diversion to Agnes, but it certainly was something new for her not to "skip the poky

parts," as she expressed it; meaning thereby the moralizing and philosophizing in which many novel writers indulge. She had marked a few passages independently, curious to know if Winnie would in her turn call special attention to them, and in one of them had found a thought upon which she pondered considerably. "The one secret of life and development is not to devise and plan, but to fall in with the forces at work—to do every moment's duty aright—and let come, not what will, for there is no such thing, but what the eternal Thought wills for each of us, has intended in each of us from the first."

Life and hope and happiness were young and strong in Agnes Haliburton's heart. Desire and anticipation had painted glowing pictures of a future which she was impatient for the years to bring. These were none the less beautiful and entrancing because vaguely defined. The colors were all there, lavish and brilliant, and the principal objects clearly enough outlined. It was to her a new idea that human beings had, after all, less to do with the ordering of their own lives than appeared on the

surface of them. It was not a pleasant thought, but she was philosophical enough to perceive that, if it were a fact, the quicker she recognized it and reconciled herself to it, the better it would be for her. Her long talks with Winnie had somewhat prepared her for this line of thought, and intellectually she was herself bright and active, though superficial. Her powers of observation were turned in new directions, and whatever she saw or recalled helped to indorse the new truths which were presented to her. For the first time in her life Agnes Haliburton had really begun to think.

Another little sentence in the same book struck her forcibly, perhaps from its oddity, for at first she did not fully comprehend it. "Our ills are all easier to help than we know—except the one ill of a central self, which God himself finds it hard to help." That a "central self" could be an objectionable thing seemed at first thought absurd, and it was not until she had carried her difficulty to Winnie that she comprehended the grand scope and truth of the words. Selfishness was something she under-

stood—nothing could be easier of definition, nothing was more common and contemptible. So she honestly told herself. Yet her definition—though the usual one—was as narrow and shallow as the worldly and superficial experience from which it sprang. To give away the larger half of the piece of cake or stick of candy; to wait patiently while others are served at table; to yield a comfortable seat for one less easy—this is the elementary form of instruction in the matter of unselfishness. It has reference merely to the physical and material phases of life, as all elementary teaching must have. With how many persons does it ever extend beyond—into the moral and spiritual existence?

Agnes had never felt better satisfied with herself than after her explanation and apology to Dr. Davidge. It was a great moral victory, great in proportion to the effort it required, and the fact that it was the first time in her life that she had ever fought such a battle with herself. But this satisfaction was not so great that she was willing to purchase more of it at the same

price. How to make to Lon Morse proper acknowledgment of his service to her in various ways—particularly on that most memorable night—was one of her most troublesome meditations, and no amount of thought suggested any way out of the difficulty, except that of straightforward speech. She grew more uncomfortable about it as the days went on and she saw him frequently.

He stopped at the school-house one afternoon, just as Agnes was leaving it, to bring a black-board eraser he had made for her; a neat little affair of pine wood and sheep's wool, with which Agnes was particularly pleased. How could he have discovered her aversion to chalk-dust, she wondered. Nobody but herself knew that it made her shiver to touch the cloth which held it.

As he raised his hat and started to cross the fields, Agnes called after him,—

“If you please, Mr. Morse.”

He turned around quickly.

Agnes was locking the school-house door. She did not turn as she spoke to him; she could not have said it while facing him.

"I would like to have you walk with me a little way, if you can spare the time."

"With pleasure."

It was a dreadful proposition to come from her, she thought desperately, but it would be easier so. She always flinched from the young man's keen gray eyes. She need not look at him if he were beside her.

"I have long wanted to thank you," she said with difficulty, "for your kindness that night when—"

"If you would please not speak of it, Miss Haliburton!"

The tone of appeal in his voice was unmistakable. One might have supposed that he was the offender, brought unexpectedly to punishment.

"But I must speak of it, Mr. Morse," she hurried on, a tone of determination in hers. "I shall never be easy until I do. I was very, very grateful to you that night, though I knew afterwards that there was no reason for my being so frightened."

The end of Agnes's sentence seemed to be

more satisfactory to her companion than the beginning of it had been, and he forbore to reply.

"I have heard some things since that time," Agnes went on, "that have annoyed me a great deal. My friend who visited me here is accustomed to a city life, and I have no doubt seemed to Duxberry people somewhat reckless and— But he is certainly the last person to wilfully do any one a wrong. I wish you would please tell me about Alick McFarland, Mr. Morse, where you found him, and if it is true that—"

"Really there is nothing to tell, Miss Haliburton. His horse's leg was hurt in some way, and Alick was on the road all night."

"But I don't suppose that would have happened if —"

"I cannot see in what way you were to blame, Miss Haliburton."

"Mr. Cosgrove plays cards a good deal. All the young men whom I know, do. Ladies play as well as gentlemen, and occasionally for money. But of course, his doing it here was a very different thing. It would n't be thought

anything of in New York at some of the parties we've been to."

There was something singularly expressive in Lon Morse's response.

"Very likely!"

"But I particularly want to know if he borrowed any money of you, and—"

"What sneaking scoundrel told you that, Miss Haliburton?"

Lon Morse's voice was tremulous with rage.

"I beg you pardon," he said, before she had time to answer him, "but I can't take back the words if they are rough."

"Then it is true!" she exclaimed.

Lon Morse made no reply. Agnes, glancing at him, saw his face darkened by a heavy frown.

"To make mischief is quite as bad—I'm not sure that it's not a great deal worse—than to borrow money, under any circumstances. I'm sorry you should have been annoyed in this way, and I resent any interference with what is strictly my own business. I'm afraid I know to whom I am indebted for it."

The bitterness in his tone corresponded to the frown on his face. Agnes thought it best to discontinue what seemed to be as unpleasant a subject to him as it was to her.

“Does Dr. Davidge give you no idea when Sharley will be let out of jail?” she asked. “She must be in worse than solitary confinement.”

“I’m afraid it will be a long time yet,” he replied, and there was something in his tone which roused in Agnes the very suspicion he was anxious not to excite.

“Oh, mercy! You don’t mean—it can’t be possible—”

“I will tell you the exact truth, Miss Haliburton, now that I have been so stupid as to give you a hint of it. Sharley was taken quite ill day before yesterday—fortunately Mrs. Dullwedge is able to take care of her, for her own sickness was slight—and the doctor hopes that Sharley may escape as easily. Of course it is doubtful, but there can be no harm in hoping for the best. Sharley is anxious that no one shall know of it—at present. She is particu-

larly desirous to spare her mother. But I was wondering yesterday whether I ought not to tell you, for fear of what may come."

Agnes could not speak. She was wild with a great terror for Sharley, a great disappointment for herself. She had been in charge of the school for five weeks, and it sometimes seemed as if the work grew harder with every day that passed. It certainly was not strange that with no training and no experience she should have found countless difficulties in her undertaking. The pupils became naturally somewhat demoralized under this change of leadership, and in exact proportion to Sharley's ability as a teacher, did Agnes find herself at a disadvantage. All the pride and spirit which she possessed—and she had a great deal—was called into play by the demands of the position. She sometimes felt a profound satisfaction that so far she had not yielded to her discouragement, nor betrayed it to any one except her cousin Winnie.

But to continue this heroic struggle indefinitely—it was an appalling prospect! For a week she had daily expected that a time would

be set for Sharley's return and her own release, and for several minutes Sharley's danger was in her eyes of less consequence than her own discomfort.

"Of course this will trouble you some," Lon resumed after quite an interval of silence. "It troubles me a great deal, though I know very well that nothing was ever prevented or ever accomplished by worry."

"It's not wholly on Sharley's—Oh, Mr. Morse, I know it's dreadfully selfish in me, but it does n't seem as if I could go on with the school another single day! There!"

It was out, finally, and to Lon Morse, too, the last person in Duxberry to whom, half an hour before, she would have made such a revelation.

"I can't wonder that you feel so," Lon said very quietly. "I know how hard it has been for you."

He know! How did it happen that he knew? He seemed to know a great many things that Agnes had not suspected him of knowing.

"You've been very kind and very courageous. Sharley appreciates it fully, so does Dr. Davidge

and — This morning Dr. Holbrook told me that he thought you had done wonders under the circumstances.”

“ That was good of him.”

Agnes tried to laugh, but the attempt ended in a little gasp.

“ He has been pretty constant in his attendance, has n't he ? ”

“ Oh, yes. He evidently thought at first that Sharley had lost her wits when she proposed my taking her place.”

“ I really think, Miss Haliburton, that no one could have done any better than you have—I mean no one who was as new to the business as you were. I should be very sorry, on Sharley's account, to have you give it up now.”

“ Oh, I'll try to stand it a while longer,” and Agnes's tone was a very dismal one. “ I hope I'm ready not quite so selfish as I seem, and if I am, this will be a very good thing for me—a sort of penance, you know. Poor Sharley! How glad she'd be to take her old place again.”

“ And we to see her in it. This has been a great trial to her friends. I hope it is not go-

ing to prove an even greater one. I really don't see how her mother and the family have got along without her. No outsider can possibly understand how her mother and all the children rely upon her."

"I can imagine it, at any rate. Sharley's a regular soldier. She's got a sort of Joan of Arc element about her. All the girls at school used to go to her for advice and help and everything, and do exactly as she told them, too. And she's so bright and jolly all the time!"

"No one knows better than I do what Sharley Kenyon is," Lon Morse said quietly.

There was no mistaking the depths of feeling in the simple words. To Agnes they gave a feeling of absolute awe. There was nothing more said between them, and in a few minutes he left her at her uncle's house.

Winnie saw them coming down the road together. She noticed the flush on Agnes's face and a certain excitement in her manner as she came into the room. It seemed a pleasurable one—an innocent subterfuge on Agnes's part.

"You've had a pleasant walk," Winnie exclaimed, in a satisfied tone.

"And with your old Greek hero—think of that!" and Agnes waved her hat around her head. "Once more the gods walk with mortals—and it is to be hoped that the mortals are sufficiently grateful."

She drew a little low rocking-chair close to the window, but it could not be possible that it was to look after the tall figure striding so fast across the fields.

"How have things gone to-day, Agnes?" her cousin asked her.

Agnes did not seem to hear the question. At any rate she did not answer it, but asked one herself.

"Did you ever suspect, Winnie, that Lon Morse was very fond of Sharley Kenyon?"

"Why, Agnes!"

"I've thought so a long time, and now I feel almost sure of it. It's just an awful pity any way. He's too nice a fellow to—I always did wonder what Jack Godfrey—" There she came to a sudden stop.

"You used to admire Jack Godfrey," Winnie returned, with a sly smile.

Agnes made a wry face.

"Of course he's fine-looking and very much of a gentleman, but somehow—"

"And Lon is a little more tolerable than you supposed—is n't he?"

"Why, yes—though that is not saying a great deal. But you have not answered my question, Winnie. What do think?"

"I'm afraid you're right, Agnes," was the reluctant admission.

"You've thought so, too?"

"Yes."

"Do you suppose Sharley suspects it?"

"Not in the least—fortunately."

"I don't know about its being 'fortunately. I think it's all wrong. I don't believe Sharley cares half so much about Jack Godfrey as she ought to—there! And Lon Morse just despises him—I'm sure of that."

"I'm surprised that you should get that idea, Agnes. He certainly could n't have said so."

“Why not?”

“Because it would not be in the least like him.”

“I suppose you know that he does n’t like—that he ’s jealous of Jack Godfrey?”

“I know he never liked him, even before Sharley’s engagement, but then they could n’t be expected to have much in common. Lon is always very careful what he says about any body.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

LITTLE Mary Maynard was ailing; slightly, but enough to seriously disturb Miss Bascom, and cause considerable apprehension to Mr. Maynard and Winnie. The faintest symptom of disease was just then of exaggerated importance in Duxberry; one of the principal topics of conversation being the contagion at Jean Dullwedge's house, and the fear that it might spread through the town.

Dr. Davidge was promptly called upon, and after a minute's examination of the little girl, reassured them all in a way which no one could suspect or question, that the trouble was nothing worse than an ordinary cold.

"I did think," Miss Bascom declared vehemently, "that I should never get to sister Ellen's after all. It's first one thing and then

another. I can't imagine what'll come next, but I guess if I'm wise in my generation I sha'n't stay much longer to find out. Bob has n't had his usual appetite lately. It looks suspicious. It's time I started."

"Miss Angeline is really going this time, you think?" the doctor asked Winnie as soon as they were alone.

"Really going, I'm afraid," Winnie answered. "And of course it's selfish in us to want to keep her. The Barkers need her even more than we do—so you can guess how much that is. I'm so much better myself that I'm sure I can get along. Father has found a little girl who can come next week to help me. I think I can manage very well."

"I shall be my own judge of that. I shall keep my eye on you."

"Oh, I'm too honest to object to that, Dr. Davidge," Winnie responded with a laugh.

"I wish you had another reason for not objecting?"

"Another reason?"

"That you would like to have me call once in

a while in a friendly way. Heretofore it has been purely professional."

"You know I would, doctor."

"For my visits have done me more good than they have you," he continued.

"That would n't be possible."

"They've done more for me than you will ever realize. Not that I've grown to believe as you do about many things—the most vital things in life, as you consider them, but it's something to know that there's such faith somewhere in the world to comfort somebody. How is your cousin getting along nowadays?"

"Agnes? Oh—she's doing nicely—that is, a great deal better than you would expect under the circumstances. She's restless and discontented, but you've no idea how she tries to hide it."

"That certainly is a credit to her. Dr. Holbrook expresses himself as much pleased with the work she is doing in school."

"But it's very hard for her."

"I've no doubt of it."

"How soon do you think Sharley will be able

to take the place again, doctor? Oh, I wonder if she has any idea how thankful we shall all be to have her with us once more."

"There's young Godfrey, crossing the road," the doctor said hastily. "Does he call here often?"

"He has been pretty often lately—since Sharley has been away. I suppose he is lonely without her and likes to come among her friends."

"And particularly likes Miss Haliburton!"

"Yes. He has always admired her very much."

"Humph!"

"Jack Godfrey is not one of your favorites, Doctor, nor one of the Slocums," and Winnie laughed again.

"By no means; and the Slocums and I would have an agreement of opinion for the first time in our lives."

"I supposed you were going to New York long before this, Mr. Godfrey," was one of the first things which Agnes said to her caller when she met him in the parlor. "You are always put-

ting it off on some excuse or other. Now tell me, please, the real reason for your delay."

"You 've no idea how unwilling I am to leave Duxberry, Miss Haliburton."

"Oh, nonsense! You don't expect me to consider that bit of sarcasm any answer to my question, do you?"

Jack Godfrey did not look as if he were in a particularly gay humor that evening. On the contrary he was graver than usual and seemed preoccupied.

"It's the literal truth, Miss Haliburton," he said earnestly, "whatever you choose to consider it."

"And how long has it been true, then?" she asked. "What is it in Duxberry that you 've become so suddenly fond of?"

The young man gave her a most significant look, but said nothing. His expression was lost upon Agnes, however. Her mind was occupied with another subject than Jack Godfrey.

"I suppose you would be as glad to get away as I shall be—and I could n't state it any more strongly than that!"

A heavy sigh was the only response. Agnes found her efforts at conversation a little irksome.

"I suppose, of course, you hate to leave Sharley, and no doubt you feel all the time worried about her."

"Sharley! Oh, Miss Haliburton!"

"Well," Agnes remarked a little later, after vainly waiting for him to continue that subject or introduce another.

"I am—I—that is, I'm not myself to-night," he stammered, looking infinitely distressed. "I'm in great perplexity of mind."

Agnes tried to look concerned and encouraging, succeeding, unfortunately, only too well.

"Did you ever find it hard to decide what your duty was in any particular case, and to do it after you had decided?"

"Yes."

Another long pause. Jack Godfrey vigorously wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, evidently in as great a perplexity as ever.

"So that is your trouble?" and there was a suggestion of sympathy in Agnes's voice.

"But it is not the only one," he replied dolefully.

"I'm sorry for that."

"Are you really sorry, Miss Haliburton?"

She looked at him in surprise.

"Suppose a man finds that he has made a great mistake in his life, and can only correct it by making somebody else—some innocent person—perfectly miserable. What ought he to do then?"

Agnes stood aghast. Such metaphysical problems were as far beyond her line of thought as she would have imagined them to be beyond his.

"A year ago, or a little less than a year ago," he plunged on, apparently terrified at his own words, "I felt so sure of myself—of my own affection, that it was—I—of course I ought to have been more sure—to have waited longer, but—"

He applied his handkerchief again. Agnes was fond of "Bleak House," and though she could not remember whether or not "the young man by the name of Guppy" used his hand-

kerchief in that particular way, she was comically reminded of him just then, and of his last interview with Esther Summerson. She used hers to cover the laugh which she felt was particularly out of place, but which overcame her at the droll recollection. The young man however was too engrossed with himself to notice the movement.

"For some time," he resumed at last, "I feared you had as recklessly become engaged to Mr. Cosgrove. It was a relief to me—a great relief, I beg you to believe, Miss Haliburton—to find that I was mistaken."

The smile had faded from Agnes's face.

"Who told that?" she demanded sharply.

"I asked—er—Bob!"

Agnes felt a fresh inclination to laugh at a vision of such an interview.

"My first thought was for you," he resumed as she made no comment on his answer. "He is in no way worthy of you. But my next was for myself. Oh, Miss Haliburton—Agnes,—even before you came to Duxberry I feared I

had made a mistake in my—my attachment to Sharley Kenyon, much as I appreciate her. She is a splendid girl—far too good for me, you understand. But I never—never felt the same to Sharley, long as I have known her, that I have felt for you—that I do feel and—”

A perfect shout of laughter broke from Agnes—an effective interruption of his speech. She had in vain attempted to check his utterance at his first reference to Sharley, hardly comprehending, even then, the point he was trying to make. But, once started, he became eloquent, and it was not until Agnes’s ludicrous understanding of his intention that he was forced to stop even to take breath.

The sound of Agnes’s merriment reached Winnie and Dr. Davidge. The former looked surprised ; the latter, angry.

“Your cousin evidently enjoys that young dandy’s society,” the doctor observed, with his characteristic scowl. Winnie said nothing.

“I beg you to excuse me, Mr. Godfrey,” Agnes gasped, as soon as she could control her laughter sufficiently to speak at all. Whatever

he might have felt for her, as he had termed it, he certainly looked just then as if he had murder in his heart.

"I don't feel that it's in good taste," Agnes went on, wiping the tears from her eyes, "to tell me how you feel about Sharley before you've offered her the information. Is that the duty you have to do, that's going to make somebody perfectly miserable?"

The fury of her visitor was beyond all speech.

"If it is," she went on, "I think you may safely take some risk in that direction. Sharley Kenyon made a bigger blunder than you ever did, once in her life. If she has n't long ago found it out, I'm mistaken! I'm delighted to know that you're going to give her a chance to—"

"Miss Haliburton!"

Jack Godfrey had found his voice this time, but it served only for that one exclamation.

"And it doesn't hurt my feelings a bit to have you estimate Sharley so far above me. I know she's splendid and too good for you, but I did n't suppose you'd found it out yet."

"I thought you were a lady," Jack Godfrey growled under his breath.

The words took Agnes by surprise, and suggested a sudden thought. Of course, she reflected, this was abominable rudeness, perhaps even worse than his treachery and conceit. He was not slow to perceive that advantage which he had gained.

"I never believed you a heartless flirt," he said severely, "though more than one has called you so. I am glad you have yourself convinced me of it, for it is true."

Agnes made a mocking bow. She was appalled at the thought that her very carelessness and indifference to the man might have given him some ground for his presumption. Yet she had felt so free in all their intercourse, knowing that he was engaged to Sharley!

"I spoke of Miss Kenyon so as to be perfectly honest with you. I think honesty deserves a little better treatment than you give it. You don't quite understand the position, either, Miss Haliburton. Nobody can say that I was attracted to you because you're a rich

man's daughter. You can't say so yourself when you know what I know—about—your—father !”

“About—my—father !” Agnes repeated, “What do you mean ?”

She was sober enough now, as she involuntarily took a step towards him.

“Oh, no doubt you'll find out soon enough. In spite of your meanness to me I don't care to make you suffer in advance for—”

“Tell me what you mean !” Agnes excitedly demanded, “if you're man enough to do it. After having said so much—”

“I'll say more then, and tell you why I have not yet gone to New York. The gentlemen in in whose office your father secured me a place wrote to me over a month ago that they had found it necessary to sever all business and social relations with him, and must decline to receive into their employment any person of his recommending. You can draw your own inference, I suppose. I did mine.”

Agnes's face had grown white, but she tossed her head contemptuously.



"Your revenge is a noble one, Mr. Godfrey. Perhaps I deserve it, but whether I do or not, you ought to be satisfied. Now go!"—Page 325.

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"If that were all," her visitor added, "you might dismiss it with a sneer—as you pretend—but there's no end to the talk about your father's crooked way of doing business. You may not have heard any of it, however."

"Never! And I refuse to hear another word about it from you. Your revenge is a noble one, Mr. Godfrey. Perhaps I deserve it, but whether I do or not, you ought to be satisfied. Now go!"

Jack Godfrey was smiling as he picked up his hat; rather a forced expression of countenance, but it served his purpose very well.

"I was anxious to prove a sincere and disinterested friend to you, Miss Haliburton. Perhaps you will remember that fact some time in the future—if misfortune should come to you. Good evening!"

Agnes went straight from the parlor to her own rooms. She could not meet her cousin that night, though Dr. Davidge had gone, and she knew Winnie was waiting for her. She was too excited and too angry even for tears. In spite of the first comical aspect of the affair,

she had not been unconscious of the humiliating position into which she had been forced by Jack Godfrey's words. Her mortification increased as she recalled them.

Laugh at them ! How could she ever have laughed at them, even for the sake of disconcerting him ! And her father—how dared he say such things about her father ! And yet—and yet— She shivered, and her breath came hard as she recalled some vague facts which might serve as confirmation to the words. She was surprised to find so many of them. And it was three weeks since her father's last letter. A sort of despair settled down upon her as the result of her long reverie.

CHAPTER XXV.

DR. HOLBROOK was reading aloud an item in one of the New York dailies,—

“The embarrassment of Mr. John Haliburton was the main subject of conversation on the ‘street,’ and the estimate of the shortage in his accounts, after narrowing down all the excessive rumors, fixes the sum at about \$200,000. At the office of Mr. Haliburton no information could be obtained. It was stated on the street that Mr. Haliburton’s collapse was not a matter of surprise to many, and the way he had been doing business for the past six months had made banks cautious in their dealings with him. The case will soon be brought into court in a suit instituted by the merchants who procured an order of arrest, upon which Mr. Haliburton furnished bail yesterday.”

“Land’s sakes ! But it’s jist what I allers expected !”

Dr. Holbrook dropped the paper, and his usually serene countenance contracted in a frown. His wife, sitting opposite him at the breakfast table, looked equally annoyed. Mrs.

Amanda Slocum stood just inside the door with a tin pail in her hand.

“I jest ran over to see ef your Mary could let me have a pint of cream. We’re agoin’ to make doughnuts, an’ our—two—hundred—thousan’ dollars, did you say? Ain’t that a lot, though! An’ his daughter afriskin’ roun’ Duxberry all summer with her long dresses roun’ her feet, and her long feathers atop of her head! I jist wonder how she’ll feel now!”

There was no mistaking the triumphant tone in Mrs. Slocum’s voice. Mrs. Holbrook disappeared after taking the tin pail from her visitor and Dr. Holbrook clenched his hand upon the table.

“Her father’s failure or disgrace is no fault of hers, Mrs. Slocum.”

“Oh, of course not. I did n’t mean nothin’ like that.”

“And it will be hard enough for her to bear even under the best conditions. It is not likely that this piece of news will become generally known in town. I believe I am the only one in Duxberry who has the ‘Times’ every day.”

There was a plain meaning in his words, and Mrs. Slocum perceived it with a mental comment on liberty of individual opinion and freedom of personal action, which did not reflect in any way upon the liberty of the press. She merely nodded her head with a little tightening of her lips.

"Any one who is Miss Haliburton's friend," he went on, "or in fact is not one of her enemies, will have nothing but sympathy for her in this misfortune. Even an enemy might pity her—if she has one."

"She hain't made many friends in Duxberry—that's a sure thing. I'm sorry for her of course, but not so sorry as I should be ef—"

"Here's the cream, Amanda," Mrs. Holbrook interrupted in her gentle voice as she extended the pail.

There was a singular inhospitality in the words and manner of the doctor and his wife. Mrs. Slocum was not too dull to perceive it. But it had the effect of making her angry as well as hastening her departure.

Mrs. Holbrook watched her as she went down the road.

"Too bad!" she said softly, almost as if to herself.

"It's a strange Providence which brought that woman into the very room where I was reading the paper," the doctor responded, and as if he very much doubted there being any Providence about it. "Of course she will not say anything after my unmistakable hint to her, but I'm sorry she knows of it."

"So am I. Poor Agnes Haliburton!"

"It is doubtful if she has heard anything about this," the doctor resumed. "Her father would be the last person to let her know. But she has been very much depressed lately and seems a good deal discouraged with her work. I don't wonder. The temporary enthusiasm died down as soon as the novelty wore off. That did n't take many days. And the work is hard, particularly for one who is not used to any sort of work."

"You'll see her to-day, husband?"

"Oh yes, I'll see her. I've managed lately to visit the school three or four times a week, and I think she likes to have me come."

The doctor's "hint," broad as it was, could not be supposed to apply to Mrs. Slocum's sister-in-law, who in less than five minutes was informed of the item of news which had been read aloud in the doctor's dining-room.

"I guess Angeline Bascom 'll sing small with all the rest of 'em, Amanda," the elder lady remarked, after the matter had been duly discussed for fifteen or twenty minutes; "but you won't ketch her sayin' a word, nor Nathan Maynard, nor Winnie."

"I wonder ef they know about it yet."

"Know about it! They've known a good deal more than they've let on for a good while—that's my opinion. We thought it was very strange, Agnes Haliburton going to Dr. Davidge's office that day when he was visitin' her cousin reg'lar; but I've thought about it sence, an' I hain't no doubt that she went to borrow money of him to help her father. The doctor's got plenty, an' hain't got no family nor nothin'. Of course Agnes would n't ask him before her cousin. An' I guess he lent her some too. The folks said she did n't look nigh so chipper

when she went into the office as she did when she come out."

It was no wonder that Agnes Haliburton liked to have Dr. Holbrook visit the school-house, which was to her at times a literal battlefield. The children liked him, too, and during his visit he always took upon himself the whole responsibility of whatever work chanced to be going on, to the immense relief of the young teacher. He came in early that morning, and somewhat anxious. He knew something of human nature and had made a close study of Agnes. If a great blow should fall upon her he felt sure that she would utterly succumb. It was a temporary relief to him to find that so far it had not reached her, though the depression of which he had spoken to his wife was still visible.

"I hope you are not losing faith in yourself, Miss Agnes," the old gentleman said kindly, at the close of his visit. "I myself am much gratified with your work. To tell the truth, you've astonished me all the way through."

The slow tears were rising in Agnes's eyes.

"What is it, my child?" he asked with great tenderness.

"I—I think I'm homesick, Dr. Holbrook," she answered, trying to smile. "It's silly, I know, but—I—I never wanted to see my father so much in my life. I expected to leave Duxberry long before this, and it's almost winter!"

"Leave Duxberry! Why, how could you leave Duxberry just now, Miss Agnes? It would be running away from manifest destiny, and you certainly would not be willing to do that."

"I'm afraid I should be willing, Dr. Holbrook, if I had the chance."

But the chance which had been so long in coming was farther off than ever.

Sharley Kenyon was very sick, and concealment of the fact seemed as impossible as it was useless. That night Dr. Davidge drove slowly up to Mr. Kenyon's door, determined to inform the family, and thereby do what he considered a duty. He had expected to see the same anxious looks with which he was always received on these daily trips; but to his surprise the whole

family seemed in a highly jubilant state of mind. Even his usual message was not waited for.

"We've got good news for our Sharley, doctor," Mr. Kenyon announced triumphantly. "I've sold all that land, that lot down by the river, to the furniture company; they found they did n't take enough when they made their first purchase, and they've paid me a good deal more than I've been trying to get for it all these years. It means independence, almost, for us, and Sharley shall go back to school just as soon as she chooses. I wonder what she'll say to that."

"Will Jack Godfrey go with her, papa?" whispered the youngest member of the family, aged three, quite overcome at the prospective vision of Sharley's departure. There was a general laugh. Mr. Kenyon shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Now, doctor," and Mrs. Kenyon laid her hand appealingly on the doctor's arm, "you must tell Sharley that we're getting more and more impatient for her every day, and that she

shall hear some great good news just as soon as she comes home. Don't you give her the slightest hint of what it is, though !”

Dr. Davidge shook his head vigorously.

“How long do you think we must wait for her, doctor ?” Mrs. Kenyon asked a little more earnestly.

“I'll tell you after I've delivered your message and seen what effect it has.”

He managed to get away without further question, and without exciting the least suspicion. Certainly nothing was to be gained by informing them of a trouble they were powerless to help. It was cruel to mar their present enjoyment. The future held time enough for that. It was a duty easily postponed.

Jack Godfrey was waiting for him in his office, evidently with great impatience.

“Will you please tell me, doctor,” he began at once, “if it is true about Sharley ?”

“If what is true ?”

“What I've just heard—that she has been taken, too ; that she —”

Dr. Davidge made an impatient gesture.

"You could not trust your informant, then?"

"They say the disease is spreading—that there are two cases down in Millville."

"That is true."

"And Sharley?"

"It is equally true about Miss Kenyon."

"Oh, doctor!"

"Your solicitude seems to be somewhat new, Mr. Godfrey. I've seen no particular anxiety on your part before."

Jack Godfrey scowled at him. "I don't see any need of publishing my anxiety, I —"

"Nor any need, I hope, of publishing this last item of news—if there's any way of keeping it quiet a little longer."

"Is Sharley very sick? When was she taken?"

"A week ago, and I've reason to fear that it will prove a bad case."

"I would like to send some —"

"It's too late to send anything, Mr. Godfrey."

"But just a message, to —"

"Even a message. You've had abundant opportunities before now, which you did not

seem anxious to improve. No message can be of any comfort or service now."

"I can't understand your attitude towards me, Dr. Davidge," the young man exclaimed hotly. "Because I had such perfect confidence in you—and in Sharley—because I did n't waylay you on every corner to ask you about her—you seem to think—I've had plenty of chances to ask Lon Morse, and I've seen him nearly every day."

"That must have been a great relief to your mind."

Jack Godfrey caught up his hat and left the office.

CHAPTER XXVI.

As Agnes was dismissing the school the next day her attention was attracted to a most belligerent performance by Bob Gridley, who, deliberately leaving his seat, walked up to the boy nearest to him, and with a few muttered words struck him a severe blow on the side of his head. Great commotion was the result, and Agnes, who, all day had been exasperated to the last verge of endurance, administered a loud and excited reprimand to Bob. He was ordered, in company with his howling victim, to remain after school, and the rest of the scholars gradually dispersed, though consumed by anxiety to understand the significance of the "row" and watch its settlement by Miss Haliburton.

The two culprits were in due time arraigned before her.

"Now, Sam," she began to the larger of the boys, "I know that Bob didn't strike you without what he thought was good cause. What had you done or said?"

"I didn't say nothing—to him," the boy snivelled.

"Whom did you say it to?"

"I said it to myself. Guess I can say things to myself for all him," he concluded, with a defiant glance at Bob.

"He said it to me first," Bob explained, "out to recess, an' I told him if he ever said it agin I'd give him a paste side the head—an' I did."

"What did he say?" Miss Haliburton inquired.

Bob became suddenly tongue-tied, while he balanced himself on one leg.

"Why don't you tell me?"

The young lady's patience had been nearly exhausted before she began the examination, and the small stock on hand was rapidly diminishing. She gave Bob's shoulder a little shake.

"Can't you speak?" she asked angrily.

"I—I can't tell you, Miss Harry Burton,"

he stammered, changing from one leg to the other.

“Why not?”

“I—I don’t—I don’t want.”

“That’s no reason. I must know, and I can’t wait all day.”

Sam Barney had ceased his snivelling with the first sign of hesitation on Bob’s part. He was gazing at him with a triumphant leer, which increased Miss Haliburton’s perplexity.

“Now, Bob,” she began again solemnly.

“Oh, I can’t! I can’t tell you, Miss Harry Burton,” he protested, snivelling in his turn, as he tried to wrench himself away from her.

“Was it something too bad to repeat?”

“Yes, oh, yes ’m!” was Bob’s lively answer, “that was it—that’s the reason. It was something he heard last night down to Hall’s store. He said so.”

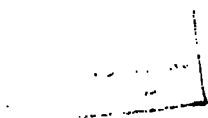
“What was it about?” Agnes asked, puzzled as to the best mode of procedure in the case.

Bob hesitated again.

“You must tell me that,” she said, with decision.



"What was it about?" Agnes asked. Bob hesitated again. "You must tell me," she said.—Page 340.
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" 'T was about—your father, Miss Harry Burton. That's why I did n't want'er —"

Agnes sprang to her feet.

" My father ! Tell me instantly what was said about my father."

She clutched Bob by the collar of his jacket. The boy was terrified at the action and the strange expression of her face.

" He said your father was a thief, and they was goin' to put him in jail—so there."

He ended the sentence with a great burst of tears.

Agnes's hand fell. She stood rigid. Sam Barney gradually approached the door—preparing to run in case of sudden attack. Bob, looking around in the greatest distress, saw a figure pass the window.

" Here's Lon Morse a-comin', Miss Harry Burton. He was there, too, and he heard it. I didn't want'er tell you anyhow. I'll lick Sam Barney for makin' me if you'll let me, Miss Harry Burton."

Sam Barney vanished through the door by which Lon Morse entered, and Bob, receiving

no denial to his proposition, followed hotly in pursuit.

Agnes still stood perfectly motionless, but the rigidity of her figure and the ghastliness of her face were startling. Lon paused just inside the door, as if hesitating about approaching her. Suddenly he made a rapid stride towards her.

"Why, Miss Haliburton, what is the matter? What has happened? Oh, don't look so," and he laid his hand lightly on her arm.

"Did you hear—what Bob said?" she asked, with stiff lips.

"I? No. What Bob said?" he repeated.

"He told me that you knew it, too,—what they are saying about my father—down in the village—at the store."

A smothered ejaculation leaped to Lon's lips, and he made a sudden movement.

"It is true, then," Agnes wailed, with a new misery in her voice. "Oh, Mr. Morse, I did n't believe it, I could n't believe it. Oh, it can't be true."

She pressed her hands together, her eyes fixed on his face as if her very life depended upon

some word of reassurance from him. He took her hands in both his, holding them firmly as he spoke to her.

"Wait a minute before you give way like this," he entreated. "Let me tell you." For a moment he paused; there was need of some preparation before he dared tell her anything.

"There is a rumor," he began slowly, "that your father has met with business losses during the past few months, which caused his failure three days ago, and his arrest by merchants who believe him responsible for the disaster; men of course, whom his failure badly affects. But bail was furnished—no doubt he has many friends who believe in him yet—and you need have no fear of his going to prison."

"A rumor, you say. What do you mean by a rumor?"

"It is only rumor, to me. I have no proof of it, no more than you have. I heard several men talking it over at the store last evening. I have told you what they said."

"And who said it first? Where did it come from? Would they make up such a story about—about any man?"

"No doubt there is some truth in it, though we cannot yet tell how much. Such reports are likely to be exaggerated at first."

"But somebody must have started it," Agnes persisted.

The frown on the young man's face betrayed his knowledge.

"Ah, you know! I see you know, Mr. Morse. Tell me. I must go myself and find out about it."

"You will not go to the Slocums on such an errand!"

"To the Slocums! How did they know? Who told them?"

"They heard that it was in a paper, and from the little I heard, I judged that Alick MacFarland was in the room while Dr. Holbrook was reading it to his wife. I imagine that Alick spoke of it to them; at any rate, that was the impression I got. I can't state that any one said so, definitely."

"And Dr. Holbrook was here yesterday, and again to-day, so kind so—so—. Oh, he must have known all the time! Why did n't he tell me? I must go to him right away. I'll ask him to show me the paper."

She was in a fearful state of excitement. A sort of frenzy had succeeded to her first stupor. Her eyes blazed, her hands were hot, and trembled even in Lon's firm grasp. While he thought rapidly of what had best be done for her, her mood changed again.

"Oh, I know it's true," she cried out, a great anguish sweeping over her face. "Something has been all wrong a long, long time. I knew there was trouble coming, only I would n't believe it, and he does n't write to me—it's weeks since his last letter, and you said something about bail, and that means—Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

She flung his hands off and sank down into her chair, her head upon her desk. Great sobs convulsed her from head to foot. Lon stood beside her, helpless, horrified.

"Oh, Miss Haliburton," he said at last, finding the sight of such misery unbearable. He laid his hand heavily on her shoulder; on her head.

She seemed not to hear him or to feel his touch.

He took a few turns about the room, irresolutely ; then stepped outside, pacing up and down. It was a long time before he found that she was growing a little quieter, and he waited a few minutes longer before he returned to the schoolroom and spoke to her.

"If I did not hope that you found some relief in such crying," he said earnestly, "I should be in despair about you. But you have shed tears enough, Miss Haliburton. You'll be sick. I will not have it. You must try and calm yourself." There was a certain mastery in his voice when he was particularly in earnest, an element which every one recognized and generally submitted to. Agnes found herself trying hard to obey him.

"I am going to Dr. Holbrook's," she said at last, raising her swollen and discolored face. Lon Morse was looking at her most pitifully.

"You must wait a while," he said gravely. "No one must see you so. By and by, when you are more yourself, I will go with you. In the mean time I shall busy myself outside here.

The fence needs repairing. It can be done now as well as at any other time—as long as the tools are at hand.”

It was an hour, and quite dusk before Lon’s work was finished. Agnes had become very quiet—as much from exhaustion as anything else—but it never would have occurred to her to dictate the time of their departure after Lon’s arrangement. She waited patiently, but put on her hat as soon as he entered the door.

“I can’t come back here to-morrow,” she half-whispered, glancing back over her shoulder as he locked up the school-house.

“It is natural that you should feel so just now,” he replied, drawing her hand through his arm as they walked away together. “To-day is only to-day. It is n’t to-morrow, and to-morrow cannot possibly be like it. You realize that, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Of course you are going to do your best to rise above this trouble—for your own sake, for the sake of your father and of your work. Your misery cannot in any way help him, and it can

hurt a great many persons,—that is, if you don't try to prevent it."

"Oh, it's easy to talk about trying," and the words came very impatiently. "I can't rise above it. I feel as if it had crushed the very life out of me. What will help me? What can I do?"

Her voice broke again and Lon felt her tremble. The tears were in her eyes also, he felt sure.

"Your pride will help you—and your common sense."

He uttered the words impressively, and knew that he was making the strongest possible appeal. When she spoke again her voice was quite steady.

"You see for yourself how little pride I have," she said with some bitterness. He perfectly understood the words though he chose to ignore their meaning. That she could break down as she had done before him—that her pride had not been sufficient to preserve her from that exposure—the sentence needed no further interpretation.

"To-morrow, Miss Haliburton, you will go on with your work as if nothing had happened. You will have a headache very likely, but no one need be the wiser for that. You will fight hard all day, perhaps for many days, to keep your self-control, but you will keep it. In that way—and I think it is the only way—you will disarm criticism and even malice, if you must needs encounter them. And you have no idea," he concluded, "how it will help you bear your pain."

They walked a little way without further speech.

"You were coming to the school-house on some errand to-night, Mr. Morse?"

She made the interrogative statement very anxiously.

"Yes—with a message for you from Dr. Davidge and—Sharley."

"Oh, what was it?"

She clutched his sleeve tightly, as she asked the question in a terrified voice.

"Sharley is worse, Miss Haliburton. The doctor wanted you to know. She sent you her

love—I'm afraid it's the last message she will send for some time—and hopes that you will be willing to keep on with her school—till she is able to take it again. And I know she had no doubt that you would do it."

From the window of her sitting-room, Mrs. Holbrook saw two figures approaching the house, and an instant later recognized them both. She opened the front door just before they reached it.

"Is the doctor at home?" Lon asked in his strong voice, as she stood on the doorstep.

"Yes, in his study. Go right in. Oh, my poor dear child!"

Lon passed on to the farther room, after seeing Agnes drawn into the tender, motherly arms, her head falling upon Mrs. Holbrook's breast.

Half an hour later, the young man left the house and walked down the road again, more rapidly than before, and straight on to Mr. Maynard's.

"Have you seen anything of Agnes?" Miss Bascom inquired in an anxious tone. "It's pretty late for her. The children were home

two hours ago and Bob's rather the worse for wear—says he had a fight with Sam Barney—and he looks like it!”

“Miss Haliburton has gone down to Dr. Holbrook's, Miss Bascom,” Lon answered. “I think she'll stay there over night—the doctor thinks it's best. She's heard—”

“Oh, just as I supposed—the story about her father that's all over town! I've felt like a toad under a harrow ever since it came to my ears. I did hope nobody would feel any special call to go to her with it, though!”

“Oh, Lon, and you've seen her! How is she going to get along with it, do you think?”

Winnie Maynard had just come into the room. Her voice trembled as she spoke.

“Better than you would suppose, Winnie; I'm sure of it. It was very hard for her at first. She wanted to see Dr. Holbrook, because he probably knows more than any one else about it, and I went there with her. She is in good hands, you know, and she will be in school to-morrow.”

“Father spoke to Dr. Holbrook this morning about it. He says he has written to New

York for all the particulars. I think he intended to tell Agnes as soon as he found out the truth—before she heard of it in any other way.”

“ Well, there ’s one thing ! ” and Miss Bascom made a wry face. “ She ’s been taking this dose by the spoonful for the last three months. Now she ’s gulped the rest of it all down at once and got through with it—I hope.”

Outside the house, in the growing darkness, Lon heard hurrying footsteps, and stopped to look around.

“ Oh, Lon, Lon,” Bob panted, as he overtook him. “ I felt just awful about Miss Harry Burton. She made me tell her, but I just pelted Sam Barney for it, you bet. Ain’t she comin’ to school to-morrow ? ”

“ Certainly she’s coming. Why not ? ”

“ Oh ! ”

“ Is Miss Haliburton fond of you—the reason you like her so much, Bob ? ”

“ No. I guess she never liked me pretty much, some way, but I like her—because I like her ! ” with which lucid explanation he ran back to the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WINNIE MAYNARD waited anxiously the next day for her cousin's return from school, and realized how intense her anxiety had been when she saw her at last coming across the fields. She was at the door to meet and welcome her.

"It's been hard work to wait for you, Agnes," Winnie said to her, "but I was glad you did n't come home this morning. I suppose you can understand that."

"Did you think I would?"

"I was afraid so. I did n't know how you would feel after such an experience as that of yesterday afternoon. Bob told me all about it as soon as he came home."

"And you knew that Lon Morse was there through it all! Oh, Winnie, think of that!"

"I did think of it—with the greatest satisfaction, too. I should have certainly gone to

you myself if he had not been there. I know from experience what a help he is in trouble, and you know it—now.”

“Yes,” Agnes assented, rather unwillingly. “But it’s my misfortune to exhibit myself—and my friends—to him in the most unfavorable light. He came to tell you that I was at Dr. Holbrook’s?”

“Yes.”

“They’ve been so kind to me, Winnie! You’ve no idea!”

Winnie was surprised at Agnes. Nothing which she had feared as the result of the trouble which had befallen her had apparently come to pass. She had anticipated the wildest and most extravagant grief as consistent with the circumstances and her cousin’s character. Agnes was quiet, almost apathetic. There was no trace about her of excitement or distress.

“I am so thankful, Agnes,” Winnie said, impulsively embracing her, “that you can get along so well with such a trial as this. It’s the greatest possible relief to see you so—so womanly about it.”

"That's a good word, Winnie. You may thank your friend, Lon Morse—I thank him, too, more than I can ever tell—for—for what he called self-control. Positively, I should be ashamed to give way as I did at first, after what he said to me—and after what I've seen all these months of the way you've borne your troubles."

"I! Oh, Agnes!"

Winnie made a little deprecatory movement. Agnes shook her head.

"Oh, I know. I've managed to get a good many ideas together since I came to Duxberry. It's lucky for me that I have something to hold on to in this crisis. And then you see," she added, with a great sigh which seemed one of positive relief, "it is n't quite so hard as if I had n't suspected anything all this time. It's something gained to know the worst. Now, instead of worrying about what's coming I can set myself to work to bear what has come. Don't you see?"

Winnie did see—and was surprised at what she saw. This was far ahead of her best hopes.

"Dr. Holbrook took me to school this morning,

and stayed the whole forenoon—took charge of the lessons and everything. My head ached so I could hardly see, for I don't believe I slept two hours last night. By noon I felt a great deal better, and I've managed to get through the day somehow."

"And every succeeding day will be a little easier, Agnes."

"Dr. Holbrook has heard from New York, Winnie, but nothing very definite. The newspaper report was all true, but instead of any trial, the affair is to be settled some way—they don't know how, exactly, yet. I know my father is n't—he can't be—the guilty man they think him. He's always meant to do right, and if they had given him time, he could have fixed things—I'm just sure of it. But the disgrace is all the same as if he'd been the worst wretch in the city, and—Winnie, do you remember how I used to feel about Mrs Lawton—because her husband was a drunkard and had been in jail for stealing? And it was a good deal less than two hundred thousand dollars!"

She laughed a little, and with great bitterness.

"Aunt Angeline says it's a poor rule that won't work both ways. Yet I don't believe there's anybody in Duxberry who would feel sorrier for me than Mrs. Lawton. I feel disgraced—I can't help it—and it's an awful feeling, Winnie."

"Oh, Agnes!"

"There is n't a bit of use talking about it, Winnie. It's something that can't be reasoned about."

"Yet could anybody with a particle of logic blame you in the very least? And it's my uncle as well as your father, Agnes."

"Do you think he will write to me—now—Winnie?"

There was something absolutely appalling to Winnie in her cousin's almost unnatural calmness.

"We must wait and see," she answered. "At any rate you must write to him, and straight off. Only think, Agnes, what he must have suffered all this time!"

Perhaps nobody in Duxberry was really surprised at the climax which had been reached in John Haliburton's affairs. His "doings," so

far as they had been known—which was only vaguely—had always excited more or less wonder and comment. His daughter's visit in town had stimulated the memories and quickened the curiosity of some of the oldest inhabitants, and it was not strange that the latest news concerning him became a fruitful topic of conversation and speculation throughout the town.

Jack Godfrey looked wise, and dropped oracular observations as to some previous knowledge of Mr. Haliburton's affairs which had led him to expect exactly this result. "Only," he remarked, "from what I had heard, I judged that his defalcations,"—it was an impressive word and he made it additionally so in his utterance—"would reach a higher amount than that stated."

The young man had not neglected the opportunities afforded by Hope, Dodge, & Hazard for placing in their hands whatever capital he could command. He was rather chagrined, however, by their reply to his first communication on the subject. They had stated that the one hundred dollars which he had sent them was too small a sum for any particularly profitable investment.

Three hundred would be an amount which would authorize him to expect at least four times that sum in return ; while for five hundred they could "secure a margin" upon which they "could safely calculate a very large figure."

The one hundred dollars which he had saved had seemed a large sum, certainly large enough to constitute one of the "small orders" which they "solicited." But the enticing prospect of making money rapidly was not to be sacrificed on account of lack of means, if it were a possible thing to obtain them. How to treble his small capital and thereby make it available for the generous purposes of Messrs. Hope, Dodge, & Hazard, was a problem to the solution of which he immediately set his mind. More than ever, after his unsatisfactory interview with Agnes Haliburton, was he determined to escape from Duxberry and from drudgery—the terms being with him synonymous—if he could possibly manage to do so.

It was not many days before Sharley Kenyon's illness was known to everybody in town. The expression of regret and sympathy was uni-

versal. Even the venomous tongues of the Slocums had nothing but tenderness for Sharley and the Kenyon family, and inquiries from all sides concerning her condition were incessant, until, after several weeks, Dr. Davidge announced that she was out of danger. It was not strange that considerable curiosity was felt as to the condition in which her sickness would leave her. Fixy Dullwedge was considered "a sight," and no special adjective was necessary to those who had had a glimpse of his disfigured face. It was not strange that the first direct question concerning Sharley's appearance should have been asked by Mrs. Slocum.

"I s'pose, Dr. Davidge, that Sharley Kenyon never 'll look like anything after this?"

It was the most delicate way in which she could frame the interrogation; but it was intended as a direct question, and one of Mrs. Slocum's axioms was, that "silence gives consent." She considered herself as effectually answered as if the doctor had not preserved a grim and scowling silence.

In less than fifteen minutes Mrs. Slocum was

in Hall's store. "I might as well get that gingham for them aprons now as any other time," she remarked mentally, while perfectly well aware that her most definite intention was "to see how Jack Godfrey took it." It was not his business to measure the gingham, but she could easily find some way of opening conversation with him, and she was even more fortunate than she had anticipated. Jack happened to be leaning over the counter to which she first turned her attention, talking with one of the clerks.

"Feelin' poorly, Jack?" she remarked, by way of opening the subject. "Seems to me you've been lookin' rather slim lately, and sorter pale."

"Oh, I'm all right," he answered, in an off-hand manner, wondering at that instant if it could be possible that his countenance showed any trace of the financial and social struggles through which he was passing.

"Everybody feels kinder shaky these days," Mrs. Slocum resumed, "ever since the Dullwedges scared all Duxberry. You must be care-

ful of yourself. And of course you're most killed about Sharley. I don't wonder at that. It's just awful!"

"Sharley is getting along all right, Mrs. Slocum."

"Oh, yes, I s'pose there's no doubt but she'll live through it. But ef I was a young girl, like Sharley, I'd most rather die."

"What in the world are you driving at, Mrs Slocum?" Jack demanded a little roughly.

"Oh, then I s'pose you hain't heard nothing! Sho! I would n't have mentioned it ef I'd a' thought of that—not for anything."

"Tell me what you've heard. I want to know, quick!"

"Why, Dr. Davidge, he says Sharley's face is as bad as Fixy Dullwedge's—the mercy knows it could n't be any worse—and he says she never'll look like anything again. It's too awful bad—such a nice girl as Sharley Kenyon is; but then what could she expect?"

Jack Godfrey leaned back heavily against the wall. There was no doubt, just then, that he looked "sorter pale." He asked no more ques-

tions of Mrs. Slocum, and disappeared silently while she was examining the gingham.

"I'm sorry for him, if he is such a little pop-injay," she mused, as, her errands both accomplished, she walked out of the store, "and I'm a good deal sorrier for Sharley Kenyon. Poor Sharley!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SHARLEY KENYON made a long journey before her family or any of her friends saw her face again,—a slow and distressing one, to the very verge of the grave. Her parents would never know how hard a battle had been waged with death before he relinquished his intended prey, and Dr. Davidge was the only one who realized it.

Under his instruction, and with her accumulating experience, Mrs. Dullwedge developed into an efficient nurse, while Fixy and his father could not do enough to show their gratitude to Sharley, and their affection for her. The doctor had fought the contagion single-handed—and had conquered it. The two cases in the little village of Millville—a mere handful of houses on the outskirts of Duxberry—had been slight, and well guarded by the families in which they occurred. Dr. Davidge began to

feel some relief from the enormous strain to which for weeks he had been subjected—even more a mental than a physical one.

Sharley's convalescence was slow, and it was some time before her parents were allowed to visit her. Their proposal to take her home with them as soon as she was able to be carried, was, to their great surprise, negatived by Sharley herself.

"I've been talking it over a little with the doctor," she said to them. "I feel as if I'd like to go away from Duxberry for a while,—just till I get strong, and feel like myself again, you know; and I propose to make aunt Hannah a little visit. Don't you think, mother, that it'll be a good plan?"

"A change is the best thing possible for her," remarked the doctor, who entered the room in time to hear the last words. "Rydersville is not far off, but it'll do, and a little change is better than none. I think it's a very wise arrangement."

He spoke as if it were definitely made and settled, as indeed it was, practically, though

Mrs. Kenyon cried a good deal over the proposal. She could not wonder that Sharley shrank from meeting the children and her old friends, and cried the harder when she thought of the reason. She was disappointed, too, that her daughter showed so little joy at the good fortune which had befallen the family. Mr. Kenyon had always been "land-poor," but he was a rich man now, and able to give his children anything they wanted. Sharley seemed to want nothing—but to hide herself away and be quiet. She could do both in her aunt Hannah's house.

Lon Morse was the only person who saw her before she was taken to Rydersville. He had asked for the privilege like one who cannot be denied, and though, at first, Sharley hesitated, it was only for an instant.

There was a pitiful expression on her face as he came into the house, but Lon could not trust himself to look at her. She had risen to meet him. He drew her head down upon his shoulder, and stroked her hair with a hand that trembled in spite of its strength.

"Why, Lon, I really thought this was going

to be harder for me than for you," she said at last, when he released her. "Think how selfish that was!"

"Oh, you're very selfish, Sharley—we all know that!"

He was looking at her now, and with a smile in his eyes. He held her off at arm's length.

"Why, Sharley!" he cried, in a sort of ecstasy, "it's going to be all right in time! I thought—I imagined—I don't know what I imagined, but something infinitely worse than this!"

"Yet 'this' is pretty dreadful, Lon," and Sharley shook her head. "Even Dr. Davidge does n't feel 'certain sure' of me yet. He is very conscientious in the matter of encouragement."

"But you'll be yourself—you'll be Sharley Kenyon to the end of time!" he exclaimed rapturously. "It's no particular matter, after all, what you look like. What possible difference can it make to those—who—love you, Sharley?"

"Yes, it's going to be Sharley Kenyon to the end of time, as you say, Lon. You don't

realize how literally true your words are. I want to tell you something."

For years it had been their custom to confide in each other, with that brotherly and sisterly affection which was so precious to both of them. There was no one living to whom Sharley so readily went for help and enlightenment in any perplexity—and she had one now.

"Don't think I'm altogether stupid, Lon, if I show you this," and she drew a letter from her pocket. "I can't be mistaken as to what it means, of course, but I want you to tell me what I had better do about it."

Lon's brow contracted as he recognized the handwriting. It was Jack Godfrey's.

"When did this come?" he asked, as he opened it.

"Last night, and I thought, after I had read it, I'd give anything to have you read it, too. All Duxberry might, also, so far as any meaning it conveys—by itself. It's only because I know Jack wrote it, and wrote it to me, that it's at all intelligible."

It certainly was a curious composition,—a

jumble of "doubt" and "suspense" interspersed with "high moral principles," and certain "mistaken notions of honor," which might lead to "worse trouble in the future than could be created in the present." It deplored "mistakes of judgment" and "rash decisions." Complaint was made of certain vague business complications which "darkened the future," but of the charms of "confidence and friendship" which, "in those of the highest natures," survived all change and disappointment. Jack expressed his great sympathy for Sharley's sickness, and his great joy at her recovery, in straightforward terms,—the only clear sentences in the letter, but concluded by mysterious reference to his own distressed and doubtful state of mind.

Lon looked up from the letter in speechless amazement.

"This has been a long time coming, Lon. I saw it and felt it, even before my sickness; and now, if I only knew the wisest way to end the whole miserable affair!"

"And you can talk it over in this way! Why, Sharley, you don't seem to care."

"You don't realize how gradually I've been getting ready for it. It seems sudden to you, and yet you must have known something of—" She checked herself quickly. "Perhaps that is why I don't seem to care. And there's another reason."

Lon Morse almost held his breath as he listened to her, bewildered by his own thoughts.

"It's been a mistake, Lon, from the very first. I've seen it lately, as my father and mother saw it a year ago. I tried to shut my eyes to it, after I found out,—that was natural, I suppose,—and I did n't see any way out of it, either, if it were a mistake. I'm glad I can see the end of it now, some way."

"Shall you answer this letter?" Lon asked, in a slightly restrained voice, which gave a touch of stiffness to the tone.

"I want you to tell me what to do."

"Then don't answer it, Sharley."

"There's really nothing in it to answer," she replied, after a little pause. "I can thank him for his interest and sympathy, but that's mockery!"

"I should think so ! Let him take the thanks for granted."

"Then we'll put this letter away and all thought of it. I want to ask you about—"

But he laid his hand on the sheet as she was folding it.

"One more question, Sharley. I never was so curious about anything in my life. Don't you feel the least regret, the least pain about this?"

It seemed to Lon a long time before she answered,—long enough for him to be sorry that he had asked the question. After all, he thought, he might have been more considerate, or waited awhile.

"There's been a great deal of both, Lon," she said at last, slowly, and as if she doubted her ability to state the matter as clearly as she wished. "No girl can go through such an experience as this and not feel it. I honestly thought that I loved Jack, and I felt sure that he cared just as much for me. It's horrid to see such faith and such love go all to pieces, and find what a fool you've been ; it takes away

all confidence in yourself. Then there's the real genuine liking that underlies the love,—the friendship part of it,—that's got to go too, with all the rest. And the one who has been the nearest to you in all the world must be the greatest stranger,—the farthest off, always."

Sharley did not talk easily. Lon made a movement to stop her.

"No no," she said, "I want to explain it to you if I possibly can. My pride has suffered dreadfully—you can't have the least idea how much—and it has hurt me down deep, in a way that I can't make you understand if I try. And I must have a little time to get over it—before I can feel all right again, and as I did before.

Lon said no more. He felt sure that he did understand, perhaps better than Sharley thought, and there was a certain new expression in her face, aside from its altered appearance, that told of new experiences since he had seen her—a more earnest, a shade less happier look, than had formerly belonged there. But she was honest, he knew that, in every word she said.

"Tell me now the very best thing about your-

self," she demanded, looking up at him with smiling eyes.

"It's about machinery, of course, Sharley."

"Well!"

"The model of the threshing-machine has gone to Washington, and I've reason to have great hopes of it."

"Oh Lon!"

"Do you remember the morning Alick McFarland was found down on the Forge road?"

"The morning you found him, you mean. Yes."

"I was on my way over to the Hollow when I was sent on that errand. I must say, I wished Alick McFarland was in the Red Sea—for the space of five minutes. I had promised to meet a man over there that forenoon—a Colonel Carpenter—who looked into the Fair long enough to examine some of the models, and was specially interested in that one. He was travelling through the State on some patent business. I promised to meet him and talk it over, but I could n't go; so I lost the chance of doing anything that time."

Sharley repeated her exclamation, "Oh, Lon!"

"But three weeks ago he wrote to me—to my surprise, for I supposed he'd forgotten all about it by this time. And I've sent on the model, which he praises extravagantly, and feels sure is going to be a great thing, some day."

"And to think how it has all come about!"

"This Colonel Carpenter has almost as great a craze over inventions as I have, and particularly farming implements. I suppose that accounts for it."

"Bless Colonel Carpenter!" Sharley exclaimed fervently. "You deserve success, Lon, and so you'll have it."

"Oh, what logic!" and Lon shook his head.

"I thought better of your reasoning powers, Sharley."

"Now tell me, Lon, all about Winnie and Agnes—Miss Haliburton. I sha'n't see them for a long time yet."

"But has n't the doctor told you?"

"Oh, a little, of course; that is, he's answered my questions, and two or three times,

he's said very complimentary things about Agnes. I'm glad they 're getting better acquainted. But I want to know more. I heard you happened to be at the school-house when she found out about her father."

"Yes."

"Was n't it a dreadful blow to her? Dr. Davidge says she has appeared about as usual ever since, but I confess I don't understand it. I thought Agnes was the sort of girl to be utterly crushed by such a thing."

"So did I, and it was very hard for her for a while. But it was n't as sudden to her as a great many thought. She's been uneasy about her father for a long time—gradually getting ready for it, Sharley."

They both understood that fact. Sharley sighed—as she had not done for herself.

"And did you know that Miss Bascom had gone at last, Sharley? She really meant it this time. She's at the Barkers."

"And Winnie?"

"Winnie seems just as she used to before the accident. You'll be surprised at the change in

her. Day before yesterday I stopped there on an errand for your father. Winnie was ironing and her cousin was peeling apples for apple-sauce,—think of that ! ”

“ Agnes ! ” Sharley exclaimed, as if the thought were too much for her.

“ Even Agnes—with a big checked apron on at that. In the words of the gentle Casca, ‘ I could tell you more news, too. ’ ”

“ Go on, then ! ”

“ I don’t think she was in the least disturbed by my presence on the scene. ”

“ That is news ! Agnes must have changed more than I supposed. I wonder what she will do, now that her father— ” Sharley did not finish the sentence.

“ She told me yesterday that she had had a letter from him. In fact, she read me two or three paragraphs. She is anxious to have everybody think as well as possible of her father. It was a heart-broken sort of letter in one way, principally so far as he felt how she was affected by his failure. For himself, he feels hopeful yet. Some of his friends have undertaken to

fix up his affairs, and he's going to Europe again for the present."

"And she will stay on at her uncle's while he is away?"

"I suppose so; I haven't heard anything about that; only she assured me that she should keep the school until you were ready to take it again."

Sharley gave a start at some sudden thought. "Lon! Oh, Lon!"

"What is it?"

"Something that just occurred to me, but I spoke out before I'd thought it over. I won't say anything more about it till I have. Perhaps it's a good idea."

"Very likely."

"Come, come, Lon!" and Dr. Davidge bustled into the room. "You two have talked too long already. I can't have Sharley get so excited. She's not strong enough yet,"—upon which *dictum* the interview was reluctantly terminated.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was "almost winter," Agnes Haliburton had said to Dr. Holbrook on the day preceding the one which had brought her great trouble to her. It was quite winter now, and the snow lay heaped over the face of the earth, or at least that part of it around Duxberry. Christmas had come and gone,—a very different one from any that Agnes had ever spent, and the New Year was just at hand. It was not coming as a "Happy" one to her in any sense. With all her efforts—and she certainly persevered in them—she could not advance a step beyond the place she had long occupied. She could endure it, that was all; and sometimes she wondered how she did even that without making more ado about it. She had many long talks with her cousin, but Winnie's experience was not an ex-

tensive one, and she was often perplexed in attempting to put her own faith and feeling into shape tangible enough for another's use. She talked much with Mrs. Lawton, whom she constantly visited in the new and better home prepared for the family as soon as Tom entered upon his position as foreman in the furniture factory. She was fond of her uncle, whose tender, though unexpressed, sympathy was of infinite comfort to her ; yet he seemed too well satisfied with the existing order of things to comprehend the rebellion in her heart. She had ventured to talk more freely with Lon Morse since his great kindness to her, but the only satisfaction which she derived from these brief and occasional interviews was a consciousness that she was doing him justice at last, and was thoroughly ashamed of the attitude she had so long held towards him.

But everybody about her seemed satisfied,—that was the mysterious part of it all. How could they be, with the apparently trivial or tiresome routine of duties which filled their humdrum lives? And what was she to do herself—

what was to become of her?—that was a thought equally perplexing. It was vacation now and Sharley would be able to resume her school work as soon as the school reopened. For a moment a terrible despair settled down upon Agnes, out of which a terrible question shaped itself, Why had she ever been born into the world?

She held a letter in her hands during her long reverie. She had been in no haste to read it, but she opened it now with eagerness, as if further thought was unendurable, and as if it might furnish her a way of escape from herself. It was from Arthur Cosgrove.

There could be no question of his disinterested affection for Agnes. All the love he had to give, he gave her, and it was unchanged by any change in her circumstances. He had defended her father from the first—not conscientiously, but for her sake. Apparently she was dearer to him in her adversity than she had been in her prosperity. He used every possible means to convince her of this—and it had greater weight with her than even he had dared to hope.

Winnie Maynard hurried into the room where her cousin sat reading.

"Lon has been here, Agnes, and—oh, I did n't notice!"

"I've just finished, Winnie. What is it?"

"He wants to take us both over to Rydersville to-morrow, to see Sharley. It's her proposal, and, as if she did n't feel sure that the mere invitation would be enough, she sent word that she wanted to surprise us both—that she'd got something to tell us!"

"What can it be?"

"I've no idea! Lon laughed as though it was something very pleasant. He evidently knows all about it. You'll go, Agnes?"

"Of course I'll go. I only wish we could start to-day. Winnie—"

"Well?"

"Sit down a minute, can't you? Anything waiting in the kitchen?"

"Plenty of things, but they can wait a little while if you want me."

"I do want you. I want your advice."

She pointed to the letter in her lap.

"It's from Arthur. You know how kind he's been all this dreadful time. He's never even waited for me to answer his letters."

"Yes, I know."

"But this one I'll have to answer, Winnie, and—and I don't know how to do it. You see—well, he's asked a direct question this time, and I know I can't put him off any longer."

"But you don't love him, Agnes! You've said so!"

The low, earnest tone thrilled Agnes. She frowned and moved uneasily.

"But Winnie, just think! You know I like him ever so much—I always have. And he's just as loyal to me! How many fellows do you suppose would care even more for a girl placed as I am, than for one like the Agnes Haliburton who came to Duxberry five months ago? Yet he does."

"He certainly has stood that test better than I supposed he would," Winnie admitted.

"If that has n't made any difference to him, I don't believe anything ever will," Agnes went

on hurriedly. "And you know Arthur's father is very wealthy. He's just taken Arthur into the firm, and has settled fifty thousand dollars on him—a birthday present. He was twenty-five a week ago to-day."

Agnes made a long pause, but asked no question. Winnie knew that there was a good deal more that she wanted to say.

"Now just look at my condition—there's no need of rehearsing particulars. I'm a beggar, to put the fact in the plainest words. I can't do anything. I don't know how. I never was taught. Oh, yes," she said, anticipating Winnie's impulse to speak, "I know I managed to get along with the school eleven weeks,—after a fashion,—I did n't have to admit that it was too much for me, but you know it was, in a good many ways. And what on earth could I have done with it if it had n't been for Dr. Holbrook and Lon Morse? I should never dare to take another one. I can't stay on here indefinitely—forever—living on your father. What's to become of me—that's the question—unless—I marry Arthur Cosgrove?"

“ But you will never do that, Agnes, never! How can you ? ”

“ Why should n't I ? You know perfectly well, Winnie Maynard, that there's plenty of reasons—good reasons—for it, and only one against it. And as far as that goes, I like him well enough.”

Winnie looked horrified. There was no mistaking Agnes's earnestness. She was apparently trying to convince herself—and succeeding.

“ Perhaps, Winnie, you'd have something to say about moral principle, and manliness, and a good many things that you're enthusiastic about. But you can't judge Arthur Cosgrove as you would the fellows here in Duxberry. He's lived in a different sort of world—in fashionable society, and of course, he—that is—he's not like the young men you know—Lon Morse, for instance.”

“ Even, if Arthur Cosgrove did n't drink,” Winnie began, very gravely.

“ Pooh! What's a glass of wine now and then, I'd like to know? If he was such a drunk-

ard as—or if there were any danger of his becoming a drunkard, that would be another thing.”

“Do you suppose any man ever sat deliberately to work to become a drunkard, or ever admitted that he was in danger of becoming one?” Winnie asked with great emphasis. “I don’t, and I believe Arthur Cosgrove stands in the place where thousands of other men are standing to-day—where Tom Lawton stood once, years ago. You know how I feel about that matter.”

“I think I could afford to risk that much. I have great influence over Arthur.”

Winnie said nothing. The expression of her face was most painful. Certainly, judging from Agnes’s tone and manner, she did not so much desire advice from her cousin as indorsement of her decision. So, at least, it appeared to Winnie, and she grew miserable accordingly.

But the interview proved as unsatisfactory to Agnes as it did to Winnie, judging from the reverie into which she fell after her cousin returned to the kitchen. Her eyes were fixed

with sombre expression upon aunt Melinda Maynard's picture upon the opposite wall. She remembered the time—how long ago it seemed—when she had first noticed the faded old daguerreotype. And aunt Melinda was a young girl once, mused Agnes, with a young girl's dreams and hopes and plans. What had become of them all as youth merged into middle life, and middle life into old age? Aunt Melinda had been the old maid of Duxberry in that remote period when the term was anything but a complimentary one, yet her name had been for years a synonym for all sweetness, patience, and wisdom. She had left something besides the rag-carpet—the last material work of her hands. Did it reconcile her to all the labor, and pain, and sacrifice of those eighty years? Did the pang of her “disappointment,” as it was vaguely, but significantly termed, grow less keen as the years went by? If every sorrow in the world can be outlived, provided the sufferer has time enough, then surely she had had abundant opportunity. Eighty years! What an appalling length of days!

Agnes rose at last with a new, a more peaceful expression on her face, and went hurriedly to her own room. She was very pale and very quiet when Winnie saw her again at the tea-table. That evening she went to Winnie with another letter in her hand.

“Read it,” she said briefly.

It was a short communication. She had not wasted words, but she had given Arthur Cosgrove to understand in the plainest, though kindest way, that what he had hoped and waited for could never be.

Winnie threw her arms around her cousin’s neck with a smothered, half-laughing, half-crying ejaculation.

“If I can do such a thing as this, Winnie, under such circumstances,” Agnes said deliberately, “you must begin to have some hope for me. I begin to have a little for myself.”

“Some hope for you !” Winnie repeated, “I should think so.”

“Yet you, Winnie Maynard, can have no more idea of what this means to me—”

She did not try to finish the sentence.

"I forgot to tell you one thing Arthur wrote. Bell Duncan is home again at her mother's. Only think, and she has n't been married three months yet."

"Why, what is the trouble?"

"I don't know. I never shall know—from him—after this letter!"

CHAPTER XXX.

It was a disagreeable surprise to Dr. Davidge to find that a little plan of his had been anticipated,—that Lon Morse was intending to take the two girls to visit Sharley Kenyon. He had tried for over a week to find a leisure day on which he could take Winnie to Rydersville, and the first opportunity which presented itself brought with it a disappointment.

“But why can’t you go, too, doctor?” Lon asked him. “You can take Winnie, as I know you prefer to have her, and I think Miss Haliburton will not object to ride with me. It will be an improvement on the original plan.”

It was accepted as such, and the arrangements made according to Lon’s suggestion, no one appearing disturbed by the change.

Winnie was much surprised at the first question the doctor asked her—almost the first thing he said.

"Does your cousin hear anything, nowadays, about her old friend, Miss Bell Duncan, who married and went abroad to live?"

"She heard only yesterday that she had gone back to her mother's house. She does n't know any of the circumstances."

"Humph! Then it's true!"

Winnie looked up in surprise, quite as much at his tone as at the words, and waited for some explanation.

"You see I knew something of the family some years ago, and I felt a little curiosity about this youngest daughter. Did she pretend to have any affection for the man she married, do you know?"

"Why, I know it was considered a very brilliant match. That was what it was called; and he had a great deal of money. I always took for granted that she cared for him, as she ought to care. I never heard Agnes say."

"Oh, your notion is old-fashioned. You don't keep pace with the times, Miss Winnie! Affection—truth—fidelity—those are never to be considered. They're obsolete!"

Winnie always winced at that special tone in Dr. Davidge's voice. She drew back into her corner of the carriage.

"I may never have a better chance to tell you the story I once promised you," he went on, after a long interval, and in a very different manner. "Would you like to hear it now?"

"Certainly, doctor, if you care to tell it."

"It's not a pleasant one, in any respect. I want you to know that, to begin with. Years ago, when I was a young man,—when I believed in all good things, as you do now,—I married a beautiful woman whom I loved—well, as men do love women sometimes, with a sort of insane idolatry, which ignores all reason or common sense. And I was insanely happy, too, for a time. Poor fool! When my child,—you never knew that I had a daughter, I suppose,—when she was less than a year old, my wife, her mother,—think of what these words really mean!—deserted us both,—ran away from her home, you understand, and with a man—a man whom she loved, or thought she did, as she never had me. That was Bell Duncan's oldest sister."

“Oh!”

Winnie struck her hands together.

“You’ve never before heard anything of this, I imagine!”

“Agnes spoke once of some very disgraceful affair that happened in the Duncan family long ago. She never knew herself exactly what it was. Bell Duncan was a little girl at that time, and the family always felt anxious to hush it up. That is all I ever heard.”

“Yes, they felt it very keenly at the time. I had the pleasure of learning afterwards that the woman whom I married accepted me ‘to spite her mother,’—the exact expression. The man she cared for was not rich enough to satisfy Mrs. Duncan, and she broke off the marriage. I was equally objectionable to her, but I was accepted by the daughter for the reason I have just mentioned, after she had been told that her first lover was dead. Rather an interesting family history, is it not?”

Winnie was perfectly quiet.

“What was left to me, do you think of faith in God, or man, or human nature? We talk and

think of death as the greatest evil under the sun ; yet what is death compared to the miserable life left in a man after such an experience ? I should have killed myself, had it not have been for my little girl. ”

“ And she— ”

“ You shall see her some time. She is in good hands. She will be brought up differently from what her mother was, thank God. Bell Duncan looks startingly like her sister. I knew the picture the instant I saw it the other day. ”

“ How strange all this would sound to Agnes, ” Winnie said thoughtfully, after they had been riding a long time in silence.

“ To think that she, too, should look up to Mrs. Duncan as an oracle, as her ‘ guide, counsellor, and friend. ’ Ah ! Agnes Haliburton is like hundreds of other girls—just what training and influence make them ; and there’s more than one Mrs. Duncan in the world—more’s the pity for the world ! ”

“ She will never know it now, probably. Death has come at last to help hush up the affair which the family tried so hard to keep

secret," he resumed, after another long interval of silence. "Some weeks ago—the very day that Mr. Arthur Cosgrove arrived in town, I remember,—I found some one waiting for me in my office, when I returned there after my drive with you. It was the lady who has charge of my little girl—a very dear cousin. And she had come to tell me that my little girl's mother had been dead for months. The news had just reached her, and by pure accident. I had never heard of it myself."

"Do you think," Winnie asked, "that the Duncans know that you—about your being settled here in Duxberry, and do they care anything about the child?"

"They care! My child is not an heiress, Miss Winnie. I am not a rich man. Why should they care? And there has been no word between us for many years. It is hardly likely that your cousin would mention me to them. Perhaps Mrs. Duncan has forgotten my existence. I know that she would be very glad to."

In the buggy which followed the doctor's, an equally animated conversation was carried on—

but of a vastly different nature. Agnes skillfully drew Lon Morse into a long talk about himself—a matter which needed all the skill she could bring to bear upon it. But she was an interested and appreciative listener—so much so, in fact, that he was quite annoyed on their arrival at Rydersville to realize how persistently she had kept him to that one theme.

The meeting between the three girls after their long separation was one to be always remembered. They talked as only girls can talk, under such circumstances, while Dr. Davidge and Lon Morse smiled understandingly at each other as the murmur of animated voices and quick, hearty laughter reached them from the adjoining room. The two gentlemen sat patiently with Mrs. Hannah Kenyon till such time as the young ladies should choose to rejoin them.

“And you only look as if you were blushing a little, Sharley,” Agnes said, gazing scrutinizingly at her. “I think, on the whole, it’s rather becoming. But even that color will wear off before a great while, I suppose?”

"I suppose so—and I'm perfectly willing to sacrifice the becomingness with it. Now for the surprise! Have you guessed it?"

"We have n't even tried to."

"Well, then, next week I'm going to Conwell College; to enter, if I can pass my examinations!"

"And you thought that would be a pleasant surprise?" Agnes asked reproachfully.

"Are n't you glad I'm to have such a chance—one I've wanted and needed so long?" Sharley asked in the same tone.

"Yes—I suppose so—that is, I know I ought to be."

"I'm sure I am." Winnie said emphatically. "I had to stop and think about it for a minute, though. Oh, Sharley, what shall we do without you?"

"I hope the other part of the surprise will be pleasanter, girls. Of course you've guessed that—now?"

They shook their heads.

"Agnes is to be offered a permanent position in the school here—and at a larger salary

than they ever paid me. Besides, there's to be another school-house built before long. There's need of a larger one since the factories were built."

Agnes's eyes opened more widely. She did not say a word.

"Dr. Holbrook has arranged it all. You can have it if you choose to take it, Agnes. He says you've done surprisingly good work there, and that the children are a good deal more fond of you than you ever seemed to believe. I do hope you'll go."

"Go! Of course I'll go, Sharley, and be only too thankful. I can't truly say that it's a bed of roses to me—not exactly—but I suppose I can get used to it after a while. I must do something, and I'd rather do that than anything else. In fact, it's the only thing I can do."

"You'll find Fixy Dullwedge a most valuable assistant, Agnes. He's going back after the holidays, and you'll admit that he's experienced a most decided change of heart."

"Is it possible that trouble has done that

work for him?" Agnes asked in a singular tone of voice.

"I don't know what else can have the credit of it, I'm sure. I don't take any—not the least."

"And how does Jack feel about this new move of yours, Sharley?"

It was Winnie who asked the question, and in the most innocent way possible. She had had no opportunity to see how matters had been going with Mr. Godfrey, and had heard perhaps less than any person in Duxberry of the comments made upon his infatuation for her cousin.

Agnes gave Sharley a quick, curious look. She had longed for an answer to that same question which she herself could not ask.

Sharley hesitated a moment, then spoke with her old frankness.

"Of course you will both be very much surprised, but I would rather tell you than have it reach you in some outside way. There is no longer any engagement between us. It was a mistake—we both think so—from the first.

Fortunately we found it out before it was too late."

"And you're satisfied to have it so; you're glad, Sharley Kenyon, I know you are!" and Agnes gave her a tremendous embrace. "Now do tell me, for I've always been dying to know, how in the world you ever promised to marry him. He's no more fit for you than—than"—Agnes gave her head an expressive shake in despair of finding a suitable simile.

"I think I began to care for Jack Godfrey," Sharley said, slowly, "when I found that he cared for me. He really did, then, two years ago. At any rate, he believed he did, and he made me believe it, too. I think that was the whole secret, and I guess it's not an uncommon experience with girls."

"Oh, I know it is n't," Agnes asserted vivaciously. "You see, to begin with, there's an immense fascination in the idea that somebody is desperately in love with you. Then it's easy enough to imagine that you're in love with them—with him, I mean. That's fascinating, too. And, anyway, it's just horrid to have to

break a man's heart—at any rate, that's what they always call it—when he cares for you more than anything else in the world.”

“And yet the flimsiness of it all!” Sharley exclaimed,—“I mean, making the most important decision of one's life on such unsubstantial grounds, and being in such a hurry about it!”

“‘All women love love.’ That's what Holmes says,” Winnie remarked.

“And it's all right they should; it's natural, and I could n't believe in a woman who did n't, if she only knew the real from the counterfeit, and knew what to do with it.” Sharley's voice was very earnest. The three persons in the next room had heard no peals of laughter for several minutes.

“I wonder you feel so easy about going away, Sharley,” Agnes remarked. “You told me, I remember, when I first came here, that of course I'd find you here, for, if you were alive, you'd certainly be living in Duxberry.”

“And did you suppose that meant that I preferred to live in Duxberry? Oh, you child! Did it never occur to you that folks had to do

things sometimes whether they wanted to or not, and that if they were wise they 'd try to make the best of the situation ? ”

“ No, I confess it never did in those days.”

“ And now ? ”

“ Oh, now I know it; I'm fully convinced of it.”

The distance from Rydersville to Duxberry made a necessary limit to the call. But it seemed a great trial to Agnes to say good-by to Sharley. Probably it was equally so to Winnie though she was less demonstrative.

“ I'm so glad, Sharley, about Jack Godfrey,” Agnes said vehemently, as she left her. “ Now I do hope there'll be some chance for Lon Morse. He's just splendid. I've found that out, and he's good enough for a queen ! ”

Sharley gazed at her in amazement as she turned away.

“ Is it possible,” she whispered to Winnie, “ that she thinks—that she doesn't know—”

“ Why, Sharley ! ” Winnie gasped, “ you don't mean— Why, I never thought of such a thing before ! ”

It was to be hoped that the conversation was intelligible to the two girls, for nothing more definite was said on either side.

Sharley had a chance for a few words with Lon Morse before the party drove away.

"Jack has settled it, Lon. I've had another letter from him. As I did n't answer the first one, he takes for granted that I choose to terminate an engagement which he has not been too stupid to see has been growing irksome to me for some time. Those were his exact words! And he assumes to be very angry and indignant because I did not send for him to come and see me when I was getting well!"

"You're not going to write to him?"

"There's no need. I understand him perfectly; and, what is better yet, he knows it!"

Winnie and Agnes had a long talk that night at the close of their exciting but most enjoyable day.

"And we've had more of a surprise than we counted on," Winnie said, referring to the revelation concerning Jack Godfrey. She herself had had some slight suspicion, ever since the

change in the fortunes of the Kenyon family, that Sharley would be anxious to go away to school again.

"Aren't you thankful Sharley's engagement is broken off," Agnes asked, in a tone which left no doubt of her own sentiments.

"Very thankful! There's not one of her friends who won't feel so, too."

But what Agnes most wondered at, as she lay awake that night, was the contentment, the relief, she felt at the prospect of remaining in Duxberry. It was a singular sensation. "After all," she mused, "I suppose it's nothing more than reaction after the misery of wondering so long what in the world was going to become of me!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE winter gradually wore away into a tardy spring, and during its progress there were few "doings" in Duxberry of any special importance. Miss Bascom had alternated between her sister's house and that of her rheumatic, but appreciative, brother-in-law, Deacon Hotchkiss, with occasional afternoon calls at the Maynard farmhouse, to see for herself that Winnie did not break down again under the load which was certainly a heavy one for such slender shoulders. The young girl upon whom she had depended for help had failed to come, for some inexplicable reason.

"But you see, aunt Angeline, Agnes offered to take some of the housework herself. Certain things I save for her as she insists upon it, and you've no idea how much she can do!"

Miss Bascom was silent from sheer amazement.

"Of course we all know that Agnes is not particularly happy. I don't suppose it's to be wondered at, really. . And it seems to me that she never likes to stop to think about anything. The busier she keeps the more contented she seems to feel."

"That's natural. I s'pose John Haliburton writes her occasionally some of his gilt-edged letters?"

"Yes, and only think! Uncle John seems just as hopeful as he ever did. Is n't it strange; I don't think Agnes hopes for much, though, from that direction. Dr. Holbrook has been good enough and wise enough to explain some things to her,—something about uncle John's way of managing."

"Humph! I should n't wonder if Agnes had more common sense than her feather-headed father, if one only had patience to dig down far enough to find it!"

Lon Morse made two trips to Washington during the winter, returning more enthusiastic than ever over the schemes with which he occupied himself.

"You see," he said to Winnie, "it is n't so much the money one can make in that way. I honestly believe I'd be just as interested in this sort of work if I knew it would keep me a poor man to the end of my days. What I want is to buy a farm of my own not far from New York or some large city, so I can divide my time between the two places—have all the facilities of libraries and lectures, you know, with a chance to try experiments all the time,—a sort of gentleman farmer, I would say, if I did n't despise the term so much; as if all farmers could n't be gentlemen!"

It was hoped that Sharley Kenyon would spend her spring vacation at home, but she devoted it to study instead, reserving her first visit till summer. A warm welcome awaited her from everybody in Duxberry.

"But Jack Godfrey, he's lookin' kinder streaked these days," Mrs Slocum remarked. "I guess there's no doubt he broke off with Sharley after what I told him, and jest to think that Dr. Davidge was mistaken, after all!"

Sharley spent one of her first days with Win-

nie and Agnes. The district school had closed for the season.

"It happens to be just one year ago to-day since I came into 'Duxberry doings,'" Agnes said, half-laughing, "and it's been longer than all the rest of my life put together! And Winnie's got something just perfectly splendid to tell you, Sharley! It's a great secret yet, from everybody but her father and me. Now, Winnie! Oh, you said you would tell Sharley the very first chance you got, and this is it."

"I think you would like to tell her, Agnes."

"Well, then, Winnie has been engaged to Dr. Davidge just three days! And he made an awful fuss about her being so much younger than he is—as if she could help that! and being so much better in every way—as if she could help that, either! And, oh, Sharley, he's got the dearest little daughter, about eleven years old—and it's the strangest thing! She looks ever so much like Bell Duncan, only she'll be a great deal handsomer. And all the doctor desires in life,—anyway, that's what he told me,—is, now that he's got Winnie, to have his little

girl grow up to be just such a woman as Winnie is. Did you ever see such a deluded man ! ”

Sharley was as much pleased at the intelligence as Agnes could have wished. As for Winnie—if there is such a thing as perfect happiness in this imperfect world, it certainly looked out of her serene and lovely eyes.

Jack Godfrey was one of Sharley’s first callers, to her intense and disagreeable surprise. It needed only a few words from the voluble young man to prove the object of his visit—a desire, as he termed it, “ to ignore the past, ” and an equally strong desire that Sharley “ should forgive and forget the rash action into which he had been led by her mysterious and aggravating silence. ” But a few minutes were sufficient to convince him of the uselessness of the appeal.

“ Then I suppose you hate me, Sharley. I don’t wonder. ”

“ Hate you ! Oh, Jack, you know what a foolish thing that is to say. ”

“ Then you ’ve grown utterly indifferent ! ”

“ Perhaps so. I’ve certainly tried to. ”

“ Do you care enough for me, Sharley, to save

me from prison, if you could? Oh, that's exactly what I mean! You've no idea of the fix I'm in. Curse John Haliburton and the schemes of all such men! I've sent hundreds of dollars to that New York firm that swindles people into believing that they can make a fortune for them by turning money over in their hands; and I've lost every cent of it!"

"Hundreds of dollars, Jack? But where—"

"Ah, that's just it! I've managed to borrow it from old Hall, you see, without his knowing it—a little at a time—and I'm sure he's beginning to suspect me—I'm sure of it! And if he examines the books it's all up with me!"

Sharley looked horrified,—as indeed she felt.

"If your father would let me have the money—if he would lend it to me, I—"

Sharley made a quick gesture.

"I'll ask him for it," she said curtly. "I'm not utterly indifferent to you. I don't want to see you ruined, Jack. If this experience will only save you—"

But she wondered, as he went away, if it really would, or if the mania of "making haste

to be rich " had as strong and fatal a hold upon him as upon so many thousands of others. Jack Godfrey had proved himself weaker, in many ways, than she had ever suspected. And how successfully she had once deceived herself about him!

Agnes's school opened in the fall, a week before Sharley returned to college. Lon Morse called one afternoon at the school-house, apparently without any particular reason. He looked graver than usual, and Agnes was sure that she divined the cause.

"I'm as blue as you are about Sharley's going away again!" she said impulsively. "Duxberry is never the same without her."

"But I shall not miss her as you will, Miss Haliburton." It had not yet become "Lon" and "Agnes" between them. He kept rigidly to the old formality, and as she found "Mr. Morse" too stiff a name for much of their conversation, she gave him none whatever.

"What did you say?" she asked blankly, as she heard his words.

"I shall not miss Sharley, because I shall not

be in Duxberry myself. I am going away—with her, when she goes—and most likely I shall not come back again.”

“Why—I—you—”

What an expression there was on Agnes’s face as those stammering words were on her tongue! A duller man than Lon Morse would have comprehended it, and Lon understood perfectly.

“And I was afraid, all this time, that you would not care, Agnes!”

It was several minutes before either of them spoke again. Agnes was the first to break a silence more satisfactory than any words.

“I did n’t know myself that I cared—quite so much. Truly, I did n’t!”

“And was it very mean and dishonorable and—and heartless in me to throw you off your guard in that way?” Lon asked, with a smile, as if conscious that she had seen through his little stratagem.

“Yes, I think it was; in fact, I’m perfectly sure that it was.”

“But think for a moment what justification I had! Have you ever given me the faintest—

Why, what could I do, Agnes? There was no other way for me,—any way that I could see, I mean.”

“But I thought it was Sharley you cared for, all the time, Lon!”

“And Sharley knew all the time that it was n’t,—not in this way I mean.”

They both laughed.

But Lon had told the exact truth in regard to his leaving Duxberry, though the decision had been suddenly made. He was going to Washington for a while, to work under Col. Carpenter’s direction, and if his hopes were realized, there was to be a little farm on Long Island, and a little house which he should plan and build himself, and—it had grown quite dark in the old school-house before either of them realized how late it was.

Agnes told Winnie the whole story as soon as they could get alone that evening.

“And to think I really believed it was Sharley he cared for, Winnie? You thought so, too. You said so once. Don’t you remember?”

“Ah, but I’ve known better ever since—

since that day at Rydersville!" Winnie exclaimed triumphantly. "Sharley told me how it was." And Winnie really believed she had! "What did Lon say to that, I'd like to know!"

"Oh, he called me a goose, or a dunce, or something equally complimentary,—I've forgotten just what. Think of Leonidas Morse talking to me in that style—once!" and she clenched her hand with a most menacing gesture. "There's one great favor I'm going to ask uncle Nathan, Winnie, and that is, to let Bob Gridley go and live with me when we—I—that is, when I go to Long Island,—if I ever do!"

It was not too late for Sharley to hear the same story which had been told to Winnie, before she returned to college.

"We're going to keep it a profound secret from everybody in Duxberry for a while; and we'll do better than Winnie and the doctor did. That affair was all over town in less than a week."

Sharley's shout of laughter was in amazing contrast to Agnes's earnestness.

"It'll be over town in less than twenty-four

hours, Agnes ! You won't do as well as Winnie did. What do you think Amanda Slocum told me the first thing this morning ? ”

“ Amanda Slocum ! ”

“ That she saw Lon Morse kiss you when he left you at Mr. Maynard's last night ! That argus-eyed woman ! She'd been to town for tenpenny nails, or something, I forget what. She declares there's never been such doings in Duxberry ! ”

“ Yes, they are rather new ! ” and Agnes laughed quite as heartily. “ I hope you told her, then, that— ”

“ I told her ! No, indeed ! Imagine her surprise when she finds out that I did n't tell her ! She's not particularly logical—does not go readily from cause to effect. ”

“ And, Sharley, there's one thing more I want before I can be perfectly happy—just perfectly, you understand. ”

“ Of course, Agnes. Your father is— ”

“ No, no ! He's safe enough. ”

For a moment she had actually forgotten his debts and disgrace. “ It's about you. ”

"About me!" Sharley repeated, wonderingly.

"If you were only as happy as Winnie and I are, Sharley! If you—"

"Oh, Agnes, I'm as happy and contented as you are, in my way. My heart's desire is to be gratified fully, if I live and have my health. Can't you understand that?"

"Yes—but—if there should never be any other way?"

"If I should never marry do you mean? Why, I can look forward to such a probability—and I'm sure it's very probable—without the least regret."

"That's just what Mrs. Duncan always said education and independence were sure to do for women!" Agnes cried, in a distressed tone. "I'm sure I should be perfectly miserable if I thought I'd got to teach all the days of my life; and as for Winnie, I don't believe even Winnie Maynard could be eternally contented with only her father and the children and the kitchen!"

"No, it's not natural that she should, or you either. You'll be as truly in your niche as

wives and mothers, as I shall be in mine, as a teacher. But I feel as if my work were different from yours—that it is *my* work, you understand, the thing I can do best. I never could develop into a good cook or housekeeper. Winnie is a natural one, and you're growing fast!"

"But now, Sharley, what I want to know is—"

"I know! You needn't be afraid for me, Agnes. I appreciate a good man's love too much to throw it aside if it was right for me to take it—if I loved him just as much I mean. But you ought to rejoice, Agnes, over every woman who can be put by education beyond the need of marriage for show, or support, or any such reason. Mrs. Duncan's notions are wrong, Agnes. It is just such doctrines as hers which cause such miserable marriages in the world, and better, a thousand times better, everlasting single-blessedness than even one more such!"

Everybody in Duxberry laughed, though nobody was surprised, when Miss Bascom, six

months later, suddenly married Deacon Hotchkiss. The reason she freely stated herself to all who cared to hear them.

"You see, the doctor's determined to take Winnie to his own house,—he's selfish, like all the rest of the men,—and she has n't made an angel of him quite yet. Now, Elnathan Maynard's a dreadful helpless man in some ways, just as bad as the deacon. I can't have three families on my hands, so I'm just going to marry the deacon and take him over to Elnathan's, where I expect to live the rest of my days, and that'll make things easier for me!"

Winnie and Dr. Davidge were riding together in one of the first warm days of May, in the spring which followed Agnes Haliburton's second winter in Duxberry. In a week they were to be married, very quietly, in her father's house.

"Do you remember once quoting a poem to me, beginning,—

' In the bitter waves of woe,
Beaten and tossed about, ' ? "

the doctor asked her.

“ Oh, yes! ”

“ And promising me the last verse, some time? I’ve never dared to ask for it, for fear I should ask too soon. But certainly, I’ve waited long enough, Winnie. Say the whole of it, my darling. I never heard it before, as I shall now.”

And Winnie repeated it, with a voice that broke and trembled upon some of the lines and the memories they recalled, lingering tenderly over the last two stanzas.

“ And fierce though the fiends may fight,
And long though the angels hide,
I know that Truth and Right
Have the Universe on their side.

And that somewhere beyond the stars
Is a Love that is better than Fate.
When the night unlocks her bars
I shall find it—and I can wait.”

THE END.

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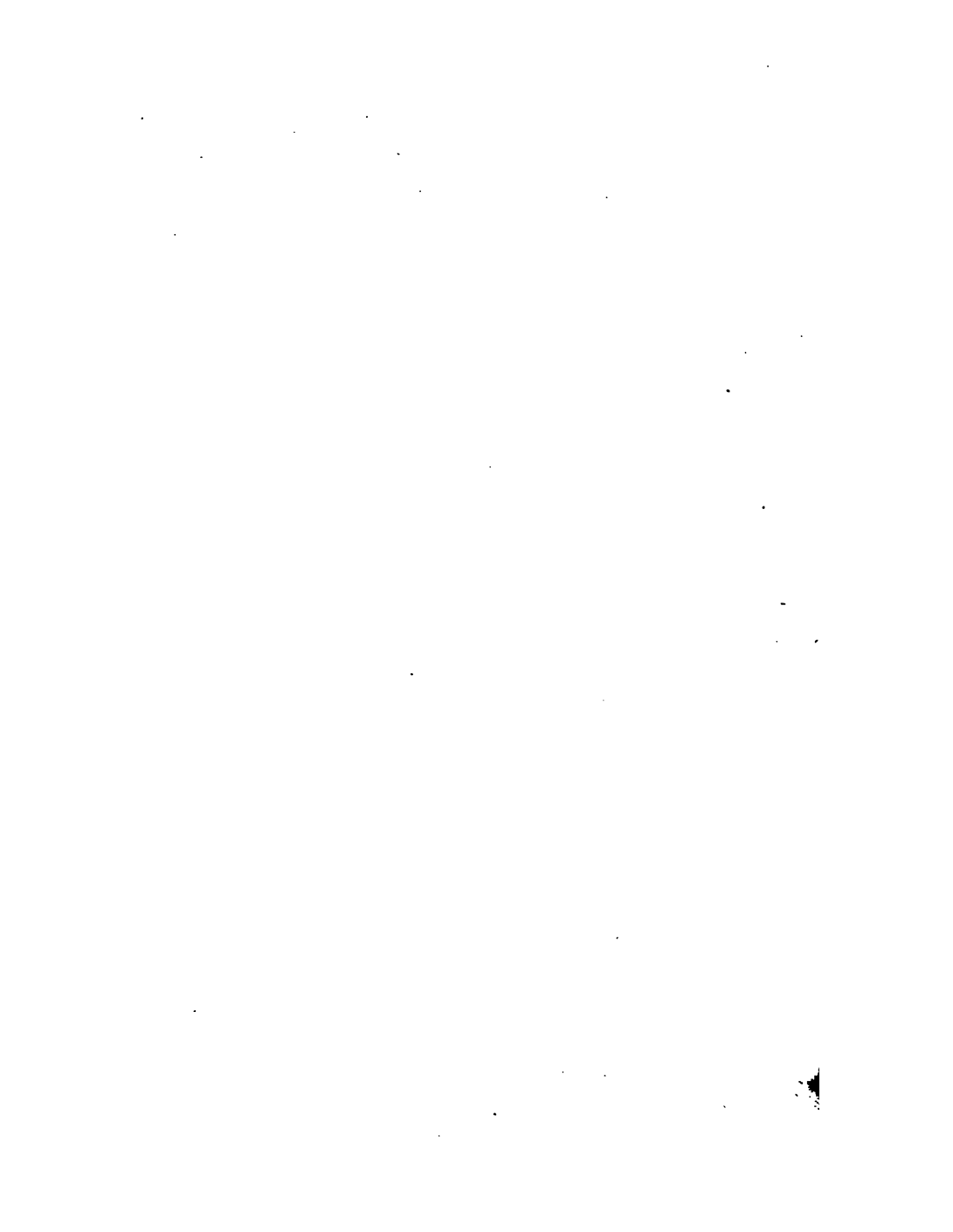
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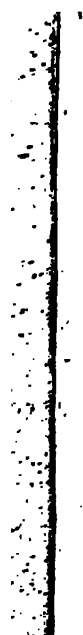
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